ANCIENT VOICES:
The Church Fathers in Ecumenical Conversations

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By
Brian R. E. Peterson, M.Div. and S.T.M.
Dayton, OH
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ANCIENT VOICES:
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Name: Peterson, Brian R. E.

APPROVED BY:

______________________________
Dennis M. Doyle, Ph.D.
Co-Director
Professor of Religious Studies

______________________________
Maureen A. Tilley, Ph.D.
Co-Director
Professor of Theology (Fordham University)

______________________________
Brad J. Kallenberg, Ph.D.
Faculty Reader
Associate Professor of Theology

______________________________
William L. Portier, Ph.D.
Faculty Reader
Mary Ann Spearin Chair in Catholic Theology

______________________________
Michael Root, Ph.D.
Faculty Reader
Professor of Theology (Catholic University of America)
ABSTRACT

ANCIENT VOICES:
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Name: Peterson, Brian R. E.
University of Dayton

Co-advisors: Dr. Dennis M. Doyle and Dr. Maureen A. Tilley

A common feature of the Ecumenical Movement of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is bi-lateral or multi-lateral dialogues. In these dialogues, two or more Christian churches arrange for meetings between representatives of each side in order to discuss how they can work toward the commonly accepted goal of “full visible unity” between the sides. This dissertation will examine the U.S. Lutheran-Catholic dialogue (hereafter, L/RC) which began in 1964 and is on-going. When churches hold these dialogues they use many sources in their conversations as they strive for ecumenical convergence, consensus, or agreement. One of the sources used in dialogues, and especially in the L/RC, that has not received any significant attention to date is the church fathers. This dissertation will examine how the L/RC used the fathers and in what capacity the fathers were an aid to the L/RC’s ecumenical work and in what capacity they were not.
As the goal of the Ecumenical Movement is the church’s “full and visible unity,” it should not be surprising that the vision of the church which has the most theological purchase at the moment is known by a cognate of unity, namely communion ecclesiology. In large part, communion ecclesiology has been based on the church fathers, and this has been the case in many different Christian traditions, including Eastern Orthodoxy and Protestant churches represented in the World Council of Churches, as well as Lutheranism and Catholicism, all of which are examined as part of this dissertation. This relationship between communion ecclesiology and the fathers is critical for my present work because it is here that the exploration of the church fathers’ place in ecumenical conversations becomes a viable and needed subject of research. Indeed, my main contention is that communion ecclesiology is both based in large part on the fathers and provides a framework for ecumenical conversation in which the fathers can be used to help forge ecumenical rapprochement.

In the case of this dissertation, the relationship between communion ecclesiology and the fathers illumines how the L/RC used the fathers. It is the combination of the manner in which the fathers are used along with what the fathers actually said that is a real hope for the ecumenical movement. The L/RC used the fathers in two general ways: as sources for constructing historical background to a dialogue topic and as sources directly in the constructive ecumenical argument of a dialogue round which provided convergence, consensus, or agreement. As the L/RC increased its focus on communion ecclesiology as a vision of the church, the more explicit did it uses the fathers, and to greater effect. Most importantly, the fathers proved most helpful when the L/RC addressed issues of apostolicity, i.e., how the churches retain the mission and identity of
the church from the time of the Apostles.
Dedicated to my wife, Terri,

who has been with me throughout this endeavor and deserves laudations for her

willingness to be longsuffering as I wrestled this project to completion.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank first my co-advisors, Drs. Doyle and Tilley. They have been wonderfully patient with me as I wrote and re-wrote numerous times. Their caring persistence and determination were critical in making this project come to the final shape it has taken. I will never forget their effect on me as a scholar and a writer.

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Drs. Kallenberg and Portier deserve recognition for their roles as my teachers and conversation partners during my time on campus, and as readers of this dissertation.

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And finally, I would like to say thank you to my former teachers, some now colleagues, but especially the students at Trinity School at Greenlawn. These students have been more inspiration than they realize. Teaching them and being educated along with them in our school’s community of learners has been a work of great joy.
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CHAPTER 1
THE CHURCH FATHERS IN ECUMENISM

Introduction

In modern ecumenism, it is a common part of the ecumenical effort for two (or sometimes more) churches to choose representatives who will meet with each other in order to discuss and address some theological or doctrinal issue that divides these churches from one another. The intent of these meetings can vary, from simply having the chance for two churches who are not very familiar with one another to gain familiarity to the more complex, constructive, and final goal of the Ecumenical Movement: full, visible unity between ecclesial bodies. Often the result of these meetings is a statement which reveals what progress has been made, given the initial intent. As these meetings progress, the participants use a number of tools and sources for their task; Scripture, theology, doctrine, history, and hermeneutics are the most common.

This present work will focus on how the church fathers are used in the U.S. Lutheran-Roman Catholic Ecumenical Dialogue (hereafter L/RC) that was begun in 1964, even before the close of Vatican II, and continues into the present day. The fathers as a source spread across the categories of theology, doctrine, and history I mentioned just above. This focus accomplishes two things. First, it allows for an examination of one of the Ecumenical Movement’s most robust and learned bi-lateral dialogues. Second,
it helps to limit the content for the two parts of this chapter’s title: the fathers under inspection are those which feature in this particular dialogue and the ecumenism for consideration is that between two churches that have the longest history of division between them in the West.

As Lutherans and Catholics work toward the aim of ecumenism, they need to be aware of what sources they use to accomplish their ecumenical tasks. Further, we need to be careful in describing how the fathers are being used as such sources (i.e., what categories of use can we find in the dialogue) and for what purpose (i.e., what is being accomplished in using the fathers in these ways in the dialogue). First, the L/RC appeals to the fathers and cites them in some rounds as evidence in order to construct histories that will serve as background to the constructive ecumenical arguments. What I mean by the constructive ecumenical argument is the formulation of an ecumenical statement that represents some level of convergence, consensus, or agreement between the dialogue partners. In particular, the L/RC uses the fathers as historical evidence to construct histories of ecclesial practice, of the development of doctrine, and (in a third case) of the “patristic intent” of the Council of Trent on a particular issue. Second, the L/RC appeals to the fathers and cites them in other rounds in three main ways: as sources for understanding a theological or doctrinal topic, as precedents either for conceiving or re-conceiving a concept or for an ecclesial practice, and as models either for conceiving or re-conceiving a concept or for an ecclesial practice. The L/RC uses the fathers in these ways for the purpose of formulating the very constructive ecumenical arguments of the dialogue rounds themselves. A corollary observation is that in the first case, when the fathers are used to construct histories as background, the topic under examination in a
particular dialogue round is not directly ecclesially-oriented; in the second case, when the fathers are used in the ecumenical arguments themselves, the topic is unmistakably ecclesially-oriented. By calling a dialogue topic ‘ecclesially-oriented’ I mean that it is addressing the nature, structure, or practices of the church.

Indeed, this gives me the chance to state the main claim of the present work: the church fathers are an aid to ecumenical dialogue because they relate any given theological topic directly to the nature, structure, or practices of the church, which is itself precisely the focus of ecumenism. In other words, these ancient voices are of greatest help to the L/RC when the dialogue uses them directly in the constructive ecumenical argument of a given round. The fathers are of greatest help in this position because they connect most any given theological topic to the church itself, and the life, activities, and structure of the church is the primary concern of ecumenism, especially in regards to the visible unity of the church.

In particular, the L/RC has used the fathers in addressing apostolicity, which is the central ecumenical issue between the majority of churches, and one that has especially vexed the ecumenical relationship between Lutherans and Catholics. In brief, the apostolicity of the church takes account of how the church, or specific churches, retains the mission and identity of the church from the time of the Apostles. The L/RC’s use of the fathers has helped to overcome or begin to overcome divergence between Lutherans and Catholics on this issue, which basically stem from the difference between viewing the apostolicity of the church as essentially rooted in its mission to preach the gospel (Lutheran) or in its institutional expression that embodies the teachings of the faith (Catholic). The conclusion of the present work, chapter 8, will examine some individual
apostolic issues from the L/RC and how the use of the fathers has been an aid in forging either convergence, consensus, or agreement between Lutherans and Catholics.

An hypothesis for explaining why it is the case that the fathers are used in such close connection to the church is that over the course of the L/RC, from 1964 through the present day, there has been a growing sense of and understanding of communion ecclesiology. Over time, this communion ecclesiology has become a framework for ecumenical dialogue. Communion ecclesiology itself entails a retrieval of the patristic sources (ressourcement). This patristically-based framework allows these dialogue partners to maintain nuanced positions and to recognize each other’s positions. The present work will not provide a tight linear argument for how this is the case for the L/RC. Instead it will offer a general pattern of patristic uses (as characterized in the previous paragraphs) that demonstrates how this framework of communion ecclesiology has impacted the ecumenical work of the L/RC.

The Plan for this Work

The main focus of this work is the way in which the L/RC has used the church fathers in its ecumenical work. Lutherans and Catholics, however, have a history that goes much beyond the work of the L/RC. So this is where this present study will itself begin. Chapter 2 will explore how in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries both the Lutheran Reformers and the Catholics made use of the fathers in their attacking and defending against one another. The Lutherans and Catholics used the fathers in the Reformation differently than they have in the U.S. L/RC dialogue. In the Reformation the fathers were used exclusively in an argumentative fashion and not at all as historical
background to an argument. Moreover, the Lutherans and Catholics used the fathers differently over the course of the first three generations of the Reformation era. In the early exchange between the Lutheran *Augsburg Confession*, the Roman *Confutation to the Augsburg Confession*, and the Lutheran *Apology to the Augsburg Confession*, both sides used the fathers argumentatively and in direct contact with one another. This period is like the current ecumenical situation in that the two sides were in direct conversation with one another. It is unlike our current situation in that the two sides in the Reformation were working in a situation in which the Roman Church was vying to remain the sole ecclesial power. In a subsequent episode, the Catholics used the fathers in the Council of Trent and the Lutheran Martin Chemnitz in his *Examination of the Council of Trent*, this time not in direct conversation with one another but still in some relation. This period is like the current situation in that the two sides each had its own authorities and judicatories. It is unlike the current situation in that the two sides were not in direct conversation with one another. In a final account, the Lutherans used the fathers in their *Magdeburg Centuries* and the Catholics in their *Annales Ecclesiastici*, but this time they were used to bolster the stridently trenchant position of each side with no communication between them. This period is simply unlike our current situation because neither side operates with the kind of entrenchment found here. Ultimately, for each of these three episodes, the difference between the two sides has to do with authority. The Lutherans argued that fathers were authoritative insofar as they adhered to Scripture. The Catholics argued that the fathers were authoritative as part of a complex tradition for which the church is responsible to hand on and interpret. In this way, the fathers became
the principal defenses of ecclesiastical positions and not a shared resource for a common enterprise, such as ecumenism.

Between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries the Lutheran and Catholic churches lived very much in isolation from one another. In the twentieth century, however, two factors brought about a sea change in the way separated churches related. These two factors were associated: the first, communion ecclesiology, is an element of the ecumenical movement, and the second is the *ressourcement* movement, the academic pursuit of retrieving ancient sources. Chapters 3 and 4 will explore how the *ressourcement* movement played a seminal role in the development of communion ecclesiology. Chapter 3 will examine the ways in which communion ecclesiology has taken shape among the Orthodox, Protestants (as represented by the World Council of Churches, i.e., more generally than just Lutherans), Roman Catholics, and Lutherans; and how these versions of communion ecclesiology have been informed by and have made use of the church fathers. Chapter 4 will do similar work, only it will take up individual representative theologians for each of the Orthodox (John Zizioulas), the Free Church Protestants (Miroslav Volf), the Roman Catholics (J.M.R. Tillard), and the Lutherans (Wolfhart Pannenberg). These two chapters are important because they demonstrate how pervasive versions of communion ecclesiology have been – and still are – among many different churches throughout the ecumenical scene and how much is made of *ressourcement* in this work by each of these churches. Since *ressourcement* has played such an important role in envisioning and formulating communion ecclesiology more broadly, it should not be surprising that there is the corollary – that the L/RC makes use
of the fathers in their ecumenical arguments when the topic either is ecclesial or ecclesially-related.

As mentioned above, the L/RC uses the church fathers both to construct histories that served as background to its ecumenical work and as part of its ecumenical arguments themselves; chapter 5 will examine the first. Even within this observation, that the L/RC uses the fathers to construct histories, we can make a distinction. For three rounds (on baptism for the forgiveness of sins, on justification, and on the one mediator, the saints and Mary), the L/RC gives joint historical readings. That is to say, the Lutheran and Catholic parties to the bilateral dialogue generally agree on the historical importance of the fathers regarding the topics for these three rounds and they agree on how to present the fathers historically. For one round (on the Nicene Creed), the L/RC gives different historical readings. In this case, the Lutherans and Catholics cannot agree on how to read the development of the *homoousion* and this is reflected in the theological difference between the two as they are presented in that round.

Chapters 6 and 7 will explore those six rounds wherein the L/RC makes use of the church fathers as part of the ecumenical argument, and this precisely because the topics under examination are either ecclesial or ecclesially-focused. Again, as with the historical readings, we can make a distinction within the argumentative readings.

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1 Brief summaries of the first ten rounds of the L/RC dialogue will be given in the next section of this chapter. For now I will simply mention the topics and give the bibliographical information in the footnotes. See *One Baptism for the Remission of Sins*, eds. Paul C. Empie and T. Austin Murphy (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1966), hereafter L/RC II; *Justification by Faith*, eds. H. George Anderson, T. Austin Murphy, and Joseph A. Burgess, (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985), hereafter L/RC VII; and *The One Mediator, the Saints, and Mary*, eds. H. George Anderson, J. Francis Stafford, and Joseph A. Burgess, (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1992), hereafter L/RC VIII.

the church, and L/RC IX, on Scripture and tradition), wherein the L/RC does not make use of any particular ecclesiology. In other words, the L/RC uses the church fathers in the arguments of these rounds, but they are not very clear on what – if any – ecclesiology the L/RC has in view. Chapter 7 takes up four of the rounds (L/RC III, on the Eucharist as sacrifice; L/RC IV, on the Eucharist and ministry; L/RC V, on papal primacy and the universal church; and L/RC X, on the church as koinonia of salvation), wherein the L/RC uses either elements of a nascent and emerging communion ecclesiology (the case of the first three) or a full-blown vision of communion ecclesiology (in the case of the last). In these cases, the L/RC uses the fathers to help make its ecumenical arguments, and the topics are ecclesially-focused, in particular focused on communion ecclesiology.

Once this examination has been made in full, I will explore some of the implications of this study for ecumenism more generally in chapter 8. I will offer the following conclusions. First, the uses of the fathers are more nuanced in the contemporary ecumenical conversations than they were in the sixteenth century. Second, because communion ecclesiology itself is based in part on ressourcement, and because it has grown as the framework in which ecumenism is done (especially in the last twenty five years and counting, since the Roman Catholic Extraordinary Synod of 1985), it should be no surprise that this has allowed for both Lutherans and Catholics to use the

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3 Teaching Authority and Infallibility in the Church, eds. Paul C. Empie, T. Autsin Murphy, and Joseph A. Burgess (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1978), hereafter L/RC VI; and Scripture and Tradition, eds. Harold J. Skillrud, J. Francis Stafford, and Daniel F. Martensen (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1995), hereafter L/RC IX.
fathers in ways that support the constructive ecumenical argument of various rounds. Third, there are, in the current ecumenical situation, some topics for which the fathers are not very useful and some for which the fathers have been and are going to be helpful in the ecumenical argument. The greatest example of the first is justification. The clearest example of the second is the various issues surrounding the issue of apostolicity: the presider at Eucharist, teaching authority, the office of ministry, infallibility, and the communion of the church. The fathers are useful here because the L/RC uses the them to help frame these discussions in terms of the purpose and function of the various aspects of apostolicity.

*The U.S. Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue and Some of Its Participants*

At this point it will be helpful to lay out a brief history of the rounds of the U.S. L/RC dialogue. I will also give brief biographical sketches of four of the dialogue members, those who did the most work in presenting background papers on the church fathers for specific dialogue rounds. Of these four, one is Lutheran – Arthur Carl Piepkorn – and three are Catholic – Walter J. Burghardt, James F. McCue, and Robert B. Eno.

*A Brief Summary of the U.S. Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue*

The dialogue meetings for L/RC I, *The Status of the Nicene Creed as Dogma of the Church*, were held over two days in July of 1965, before Vatican II’s fourth and final session later that same year. L/RC I was held, in fact, just months after Vatican II’s third session from the autumn of 1964, whereat it promulgated its *Decree on Ecumenism*. It
seemed the American Lutherans and Catholics decided that they should not waste any time in beginning a joint ecumenical endeavor. The background papers and joint statement were published in September 1965. In the end, both sides saw that the Nicene faith had a unique status among dogmas, though it did not exhaust the richness of Scripture concerning Christ, and that such authoritative teaching serves the people of God abjuring erroneous teaching and affirming truthful teaching. Additionally, two differences were noted: first, ecclesiastical sanction of doctrine differs between the two sides; and second, the nature and structure of teaching authority, along with the relation of teaching office to Scripture, differ between the two sides.

L/RC II, *One Baptism for the Remission of Sins*, was comprised of three sets of meetings held throughout 1966, with the background papers, reports and evaluations, and joint statement published the same year. The Lutherans and Catholics agreed that baptism is the rite of initiation into the church; that it involves a transition for the baptized from the realm of darkness into the realm of light; that it unites the baptized with Jesus in his death and resurrection; and that it brings about the forgiveness of sin. However, this round also raised a number of questions for both sides. The Lutherans wanted to know the Catholic view of the relationship between baptism and sins committed after baptism, what the sacrament of penance adds to baptism, and why those not baptized in Catholic or Orthodox churches are not allowed to partake in the sacraments of the Catholic Church. The Catholics wanted to know why Lutherans accept baptism as instituted by Christ, what authority the church has over the practices of

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5 See Paul C. Empie’s *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue: Personal Notes for a Study* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 4-5 for how he was a key figure in getting the L/RC meetings organized and conducted.
baptism, and if Lutheran confessional statements add anything to Scripture. Underlying many of these questions from both sides is the issue of the development of doctrine.

L/RC III, *The Eucharist as Sacrifice*, held three sets of meetings from September, 1966 until October, 1967. The background papers and statement were published in 1967. L/RC III addressed the sixteenth-century problems that arose between the Reformers and the Catholics; namely, the Eucharist as sacrifice and the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. On the first, both sides have affirmed since the sixteenth century that in the Eucharist Christ is made known as the once-and-for-all sacrifice for the sins of all, as well as that the Eucharist is the church’s sacrifice of praise and oblation. The remaining controversies between the two sides, centered on whether or how the worshiping community “offers Christ” in the Eucharist, have largely been overcome. On the second, both sides affirm that while there may be differences in language and terminology each can agree with the other that Christ is present in many ways in the world; that he is fully present in the Eucharist as human and divine in the elements of the bread and wine; and that many legitimate ways of describing this presence have been offered throughout Christian history. The divergences being overcome, though not fully in every case, are about eucharistic worship, the presence of Christ under both species (or kinds), and the Catholic use of the term ‘transubstantiation’.

L/RC IV, *Eucharist and Ministry*, held four rounds of meetings from September, 1968 to February, 1970 with the background papers and joint statement published in 1970. In each of the three previous rounds, the dialogue members found themselves confronted with the office of Ministry in relation to whatever the subject matter: creed, baptism, or Eucharist. L/RC addressed the relationship between the Eucharist and
Ministry by first making a distinction between ministry with a lower-case “m” and Ministry with an upper-case “M”. The former designates the service of the entire assembly of believers, a service from God to humanity. The latter designates that special order or function of service within and for the sake of the church as it performs its ministry to the world. L/RC IV recognized that the special Ministry is apostolic and it also recognized that apostolicity has had various referents. Lutherans have stressed that the Ministry of the church is apostolic because it has kept and passed on the teachings of the faith; but Catholics, that it is apostolic because it has kept a particular structure of authoritative office. As L/RC IV states, “We are agreed that the basic reality of the apostolic Ministry can be preserved amid variations in structure and implementation, in rites of ordination and in theological explanation.”

This certainly does not solve differences, but it does strike at convergence.

L/RC V, *Papal Primacy and the Universal Church*, was published in 1974. In facing the usual points of controversy over the papacy – whether it is biblically warranted, whether it is a matter of divine law, and the tendency of Catholics to avoid or ignore suggestions of or need for change in the papacy – L/RC V was thorough in its examination of what it called the Petrine function by means of New Testament and historical study. This Petrine function was described as, “a particular form of Ministry exercised by a person, officeholder, or local church with reference to the church as a whole.” This scriptural and historical study focused on Petrine function yielded an

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6 L/RC IV, 15.
7 L/RC V, 11.
admission by Lutherans that something like the papacy should exist and a recognition by Catholics that certain reforms in the papacy should occur.

L/RC VI, *Teaching Authority and Infallibility in the Church*, was published in 1978. The main point of convergence here was that the issue of infallibility was set in the context of the church itself and not solely in any aspect or office of the church. As for what Catholics meant by infallibility, it was quite similar to what Lutherans mean by ‘indefectibility’. Catholics speak of papal infallibility in relation to the infallibility of the church and to the confidence of the faithful transmission of the gospel. Lutherans think of indefectibility as the guarantee that the teachings of the faith are going to be transmitted to successive generations. Thus, both Catholics and Lutherans have altered their views of infallibility: Catholics have been more sensitive to set the claim to papal infallibility in the context of the infallibility of the church as a whole, while Lutherans have recognized that the bishop of Rome is in service to the authority of the Word of God.

L/RC VII, *Justification by Faith*, was published in 1985. After presenting a history of the question of justification (including the pre-Reformation, Reformation, and post-Reformation eras) and some reflections and interpretations, the Common Statement of L/RC VII ends with what it calls “perspectives for reconstruction.” In this section it explores the biblical data on justification in some detail and then describes two growing convergences between the two sides. The first is that justification is the criterion by which ecclesial practice, structure, and theology are to be judged. The second is that both sides are agreeing on a good number of material elements concerning justification; both sides agree on a number of points that help to explain how it is that believers are to put
their trust in Christ alone. These material convergences, however, do not necessitate that there be only one way of thinking about or describing God’s redemptive work. In the end, L/RC VII makes a clear affirmation that both sides have found a fundamental consensus on the gospel.

L/RC VIII, *The One Mediator, the Saints, and Mary*, was published in 1992. This round applied the doctrine of justification as the principal criterion from L/RC VII to a specific problem, namely the difference in views between Lutherans and Catholics on how to hold beliefs and engage in practices regarding the saints and Mary. L/RC VIII notes four areas of divergence between Lutherans and Catholics: the term ‘saint’, the intercession of saints, the invocation of saints, and Marian doctrine. It argues that these divergences need not be church-dividing and then remarks upon nineteen points of convergence between the two sides. Finally, L/RC VIII offers possibilities for how the two sides might grow in unity around these issues; Lutherans might learn how the teachings of Vatican II on these issues does not foster any idolatry for believers, and Catholics might allow Lutherans – in a “closer by still incomplete fellowship” – to be unobligated to invocation of the saints or belief in the two Marian dogmas.\(^8\)

L/RC IX, *Scripture and Tradition*, was published in 1995. The goal of this round was to overcome the historic opposition between a Lutheran view of *sola scriptura* and a Catholic two-source understanding of revelation by Scripture and tradition. The title of the Statement demonstrated the central means by which a number of significant points of agreement were reached between the two sides. The title was “The Word of God: Scripture and Tradition.” Both Lutherans and Catholics in L/RC IX agreed that the Word

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\(^8\) L/RC VIII, 62.
of God is the primary element in the faith, and that it has taken various forms in the life of God’s people: the incarnate Word, the Scriptural Word, and the components of tradition which carry the Word within them from generation to generation. Differences were noted: that Lutherans hold to the principle of *sola scriptura* as the norm by which doctrines or traditions are judged, while Catholics hold to Scripture along with the living apostolic tradition; and that the two sides diverge on the issue of infallibility of the church’s teaching office. These two differences were related to the difference between the two sides regarding the development of doctrine. The final word, however, was that when the Lutheran *sola scriptura* was placed in conjunction with the other Reformation principles (*sola fide, sola gratia, and solus Christus*), a very active understanding of the Word of God appears that comes close to the Catholic sense of a living tradition.

*L/RC X, The Church as Koinonia of Salvation*, was published in 2005. This round combined an examination of *koinonia* ecclesiology (or communion ecclesiology) with the idea of the “local church” in order to consider the structures of *koinonia* that exist within the Lutheran and Catholic churches and the specific offices of ordained ministry which serve them. The central observation was that the structures of Lutheran and Catholic ecclesiology reflect one another, only asymmetrically. The main concern for L/RC X was the role of the episcopate, since the role of the presbyterate and the papacy had been explored in earlier rounds. L/RC X argued that both Lutherans and Catholics have retained elements of the functional responsibility of the office of bishop, yet in different places. For instance, the Lutherans have retained the face-to-face eucharistic responsibility of the episcopate in the presbyterate, while the Catholics have
retained the regional-oversight responsibility of the episcopate in the episcopate.\textsuperscript{9} L/RC X argued that both sides should acknowledge that recognizing this asymmetry and acting on ways to minimize it would help the full \textit{koinonia} of the church.

U.S. L/RC Dialogue Members Who Presented Work on the Church Fathers

In this section I will briefly explore the intellectual lives of four of the dialogue participants in the L/RC dialogue who wrote on the church fathers for the dialogue. The reason for including this information is to show that these participants had an appreciation of the important role of historical development in the life of ideas and in the life of the church. Part of this appreciation included the role of studying the fathers (to various extents), which was done even before these men were dialogue participants.

The four are (in order of appearance) the Lutheran Arthur Carl Piepkorn, and the Roman Catholics Walter J. Burghardt, James F. McCue, and Robert B. Eno. For Piepkorn, history was something shared in the West for the first fifteen centuries by the whole church. It is this shared heritage that should serve as the backdrop for the events of the sixteenth century and those extending into our contemporary times. Making theological sense of our ecumenical situation demands this. For Burghardt, history,

\textsuperscript{9} The main issue at hand is that the two churches have kept different emphases of what were various responsibilities and expressions of the episcopate from various eras within the early church. As for the current Roman Catholic views on what comprises “the basic unity of ecclesiality” and how it relates to the episcopacy I cite a very helpful endnote from L/RC X, which reads: “Within Roman Catholicism, the terms ‘particular church’ and ‘local church’ are often used interchangeably. Most often the Second Vatican Council documents use the term ‘particular church’ to refer to the diocese, but this term can also refer to churches in the same rite region, or culture. There is no standard practice governing the use of this terminology. In spite of the Second Vatican Council’s use of the term ‘particular church,’ this term has not enjoyed widespread acceptance. Whether or not it refers to a diocese or a larger region has to be discerned from its context. The present document explore the asymmetry between Lutheran and Roman Catholic understandings of what constitutes the basic unity of ecclesiality implied by the term ‘local’ or ‘particular’ church” (L/RC X “Agreed Statement” endnote 34, 107).
especially patristic history, is the primary context in which theological work is
formulated and from which theological work comes. Without history so understood,
theology’s importance is greatly reduced. For McCue, history provides a kind of
spectrum for understanding. That is, ideas can begin at one point in history and be
brought through time and find new stresses and understandings at other points in time.
And finally, for Eno, the church fathers in particular can and should be engaged on their
own historical grounds, in their own history, not just as ahistorical sources which define
and defend dogmatic formulae.

There were many scholars who used the fathers in the L/RC, but I have chosen
ones who had the longest tenures on the dialogue and who seemed to have had the most
influence on the work of the L/RC as a whole, even if they did not write background
papers for every round they were participants. The following chart shows in which
rounds they were participants (marked by a ✓) and for which rounds they contributed
background papers using the fathers (marked by a ✓+).

| TABLE 1 ~ FOUR L/RC PARTICIPANTS WHO WROTE ON THE FATHERS |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Arthur Carl Piepkorn (1907-73) | ✓              | ✓              | ✓              | ✓+             | ✓+             | ✓              | ✓              | ✓+             |
| Walter J. Burghardt (1914-2008)    | ✓              | ✓              | ✓              | ✓+             | ✓              | ✓              | ✓              | ✓              |
| James F. McCue (1931-)              | ✓              | ✓              | ✓              | ✓+             | ✓+             | ✓              | ✓              | ✓+             |
| Robert B. Eno (1936-97)              | ✓+             | ✓+             | ✓+             | ✓+             | ✓              | ✓              | ✓              | ✓+             |

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One other point to notice about this chart is that while these dialogue members did not always write about the fathers in an official capacity for the dialogue in each case, we can be fairly confident that when patristic topics were raised in discussion, they were able to attend to the issues at hand and must have been influential in conversation.

Arthur Carl Piepkorn (1907-73)

Arthur Carl Piepkorn was born in 1907 in Wisconsin into a family belonging to the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, a national Lutheran denomination in the United States.\textsuperscript{10} When he was offered the professorship at Concordia Seminary in 1951, he accepted on the condition that he could remain an essayist and not have to become a systematician. The difference, I think, is not insignificant because an essayist is one who addresses issues as they arise, one who writes for an occasion. Piepkorn wanted to keep such freedom and not be restricted by the expectations of teaching (and possibly producing) a crisp and tidy systematic theology.

Intellectually, Piepkorn was quite convinced of how Lutherans (and other Christians, for that matter) should view the Reformation and the Lutheran “Symbolical Books.”\textsuperscript{11} For Piepkorn, the Reformation was not the beginning of a new church, but rather a part of the Church catholic that has been separated in schism due to the Council of Trent. Therefore, for instance, in his multi-volume work \textit{Profiles in Belief: The}

\textsuperscript{10} Much of the information I present in this section comes from resources found on the web at Lutherans Online, “Piepkorn Biography”, \texttt{<http://www.lutheransonline.com/servlet/lo_ProcServ/dbpage=page&gid=00001615403789030111155555>}, accessed 8 October, 2010.

\textsuperscript{11} When Piepkorn, or other Missouri Synod Lutherans, refer to the Lutheran Symbolical Books, they are referring to the pieces that make up the Book of Concord, from the Apostles’ Creed through the Formula of Concord; texts that were important next to and subordinate to the Word of God; texts that helped unpack and make sense of Scripture. In this way, these Lutherans are borrowing the ancient Greek notion of creed as “symbol”, as what witnesses and explains the faith.
Religious Bodies of the United States and Canada, Piepkorn treats the first fifteen centuries as history to which both Catholics and the Reformers are heirs in as full a sense as possible. The Symbolical Books are important not only for Lutherans, but also for Catholics (as well as other Reformation groups) because they have an inherently ecumenical character. Thus, they need to be interpreted in light of the shared history of the previous fifteen hundred years.

While Piepkorn was not a patristics scholar, he was well versed in the ancient world and in history more generally. In 1932 he finished his dissertation, entitled “Editions E, B₁₅, D, and K of the Annals of Ashurbanipal” which argued for re-dating the fall of (Egyptian) Thebes by five years. He was a theologian who knew the importance of historical context for making sense of theological ideas and movements. One of his historical judgments was that Lutheranism as a movement stood between Catholicism and the remainder of Protestantism as a movement that is confessionally catholic yet historically Protestant. Piepkorn was not so concerned to find ecumenical agreement in dogmatic formulation as much as he was concerned to find an historical consensus based on common catholic tradition. The search for this catholic history offers an alternative and corrective to both dogmatic stalemate and uncritical reconciled diversity, two potential ecumenical pitfalls. As we will see below, when Piepkorn studied the church fathers for the L/RC this was the kind of task he was about.

13 Here I cite the assessment of Paul Sauer, who writes, “The paradigm for ecumenical agreement that emerges from the totality of Piepkorn’s writings can best be seen as a reliance not on the fixed dogmas of the Church and attempts to achieve an agreement in dogmatic formulation. Rather, it seeks an agreement that is based on the common catholic tradition of the Church through fifteen centuries of shared history. This innovative approach attempts to reach an accord not by finding a middle ground or a dogmatic formulation that is acceptable to both parties. Instead, it is a reexamination of history to reach a historical consensus” (“The Legacy of Arthur Carl Piepkorn”, Lutheran Forum, Winter 2001, 23).
When Walter J. Burghardt turned eighty he wrote an autobiographical reflection, “On Turning Eighty: Autobiography in Search of Meaning” for the *Woodstock Report* and can be found on the internet. Burghardt studied for both his undergraduate and doctoral degrees under highly influential theologians. At Woodstock, from which he graduated in 1937 with his undergraduate degree, Burghardt was influenced by John Courtney Murray who advocated for a particular set of reasons why the church fathers are important: first, they help to overcome the gulf created between theology and spirituality; and second, the fathers present a clear picture of how doctrine and theological reflection have progressed and done so by taking into account the intellectual and spiritual problems of their own age. At the Catholic University of America, from which he graduated in 1957 with his doctorate (his dissertation title was “The Image of God in Man according to Cyril of Alexandria”), he was influenced by Johannes Quasten who advocated that the fathers could not really be understood without understanding classical history, culture, and literature as broadly as possible. In the midst of these academic endeavors, Burghardt was ordained in 1941.

Burghardt taught patristics from 1946 to 1974 at Woodstock, but was frustrated because he was never called upon by any other faculty from within his own department to bring his knowledge into their realms, so, for instance, as to illuminate the contexts surrounding the production of early Christian doctrines. Indeed, for most of his colleagues dogma was held suspended above history, uninfluenced by it. As we will see

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below, Burghardt’s sensibilities to the historical contexts of doctrines and the ways doctrines and theological assessments progress will have some effect on the work he produced for the L/RC.

James F. McCue (1931- )

Professor McCue was also one of the original members of the L/RC and served on its first five rounds. (Incidentally, he is the only one of these four who is still alive.) He completed his Ph.D. in 1961 from the University of Wisconsin with the dissertation title, “The Treatise ‘De proporcionibus velocitatum in motibus’ Attributed to Nicholas Oresme.”

Professor McCue has written a number of articles over the course of his career that span subjects from the early church to the medieval period, pieces that were both indirectly and directly related to his role as a participant in the U.S. L/RC. Independent of direct ecumenical dialogue he has written on such issues as “The Roman Primacy in the Second Century and the Problem of the Development of Dogma” (1964), “Roman Primacy in the First Three Centuries” (1971), and “Simul Iustus et Peccator in Augustine, Aquinas, and Luther: Toward Putting the Debate in Context” (1980).¹⁵ More directly related to ecumenical dialogue, we will see below the kinds of essays he produced for the U.S. L/RC. But he was also a key editor of an important volume of sixteenth century

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studies, *Confessing One Faith: Joint Commentary on the Augsburg Confession by Lutheran and Catholic Theologians*.16

Because of his graduate studies and his breadth of subject matter spanning from the ancient world into the sixteenth century (and beyond into the contemporary ecumenical scene), we might be able to surmise that Professor McCue is attentive to the ways in which certain historical figures and their ideas are formed in one period of history and then transported into another or other periods, all the while being aware of how these figures and their ideas are reshaped through their transportation. This would be an important sensibility to have as a member of the U.S. L/RC dialogue.

*Robert B. Eno, S.S. (1936-1997)*

Robert B. Eno came onto the L/RC after the other three men introduced above had completed their time on the dialogue.17 By 1969 he completed his Ph.D. from the Institut Catholique in Paris, his thesis entitled “The Christian Didaskolos and the Institutional Ministry of the Church according to Origen.” Eno’s time in Europe would have put him there just at the closing of Vatican II and during the immediate years following. From the fall of 1970 onward, Eno served in various professorial capacities in Church History at Catholic University of America, which became a department of the newly fashioned School of Theology and Religious Studies in 1973.

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16 George Forell and James F. McCue, eds., *Confessing One Faith: Joint Commentary on the Augsburg Confession by Lutheran and Catholic Theologians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1982).

17 A good deal of what I present here I received much help with from Ms. Jane Stoeffler of The American Catholic History Research Center and University Archives of the Catholic University of America. Ms. Stoeffler and her staff put together a very useful packet which included various lists of publications, a couple of funeral homilies, as well as press releases for activities Father Eno was involved with, in particular his ecumenical dialogue involvement.
Eno had not left us the kind of memoir that Burghardt did, so it is very difficult to grasp what kind of influences held sway on him as a student and as a scholar. What can be done, though, is to look at what he seemed to specialize in as a patristics expert. It appears that he did a good deal of writing on two main topics in the world of the church fathers: Augustine and the Papacy. Early in this time, one of the talks he gave to the International Conference on Patristic Studies was published, “Augustinian Solution to Doctrinal Problems” (1981). In August 1987, he spoke again to the Conference on “Papal Damage Control in the Aftermath of the Three Chapters Controversy.” Later, as visiting professor at John Carroll University in Cleveland for the 1987-88 academic year, he gave a series of six lectures on “The Origins and Rise of the Papacy.” Finally, in 1989 his book *Saint Augustine and the Saints* was published. During this time Eno served as Chair of the Church History Department of the School of Theology and Religious Studies from 1983-86. To have a patristics scholar as the chair of a history department of a Catholic university is important because it demonstrates an awareness that the study of the fathers can be accomplished for more than simply substantiating doctrine; and while this might have been fairly obvious by the middle 1980s, it is significant that it was actually the case.

Likewise, he was important to the L/RC since he was put on the dialogue in 1977 and remained there until his death eighteen years later. He served in this capacity, then, for more years than the other three men introduced here, even though he participated in one fewer round. Thus, during the time when Eno was able to be in a church history department where the fathers were taken seriously *historically* and not just *dogmatically*, he was also on the U.S. L/RC dialogue where the same stress was being made in
dialogue’s ecumenical endeavors. As I discuss below, Eno’s essays for the L/RC contribute at least this much.

In each of these presentations, we saw that each of these scholars was in some way or another doing a new or different kind of work from the expectations or norms of their respective traditions. That is to say, each in their own way, these four participants were striving to do their work in such a way as to show how theology is historically contingent and thereby dynamic. This very basic similar orientation by all four of these scholars, I think, has had a great impact on the U.S. L/RC dialogue because there are many places where the history of a theological topic or issue addressed by the L/RC is mined as the dialogue moves through its task. In the specific cases of the church fathers in the L/RC, as we will see in great detail in the chapters that follow, it is not simply the case that they are studied in order to construct histories that will serve as background to the dialogue’s ecumenical work. Instead, there is also the kind of study of the fathers (taking their historical situations seriously) that involves them as elements in the constructive ecumenical argument of a dialogue round as it moves toward convergence, consensus, or agreement.

*Typifying the Examination: How the Bible Has Been Used in Ecumenical Dialogue*

In order to introduce this study further, the following section will present some work on how the Bible has been used as a source in the Ecumenical Movement, including the L/RC dialogue. This will allow us to draw some comparisons and contrasts with how the fathers are used. There has not been much academic investigation examining how the church fathers are used in ecumenical conversations which is why I have taken on the
task here. But there has been some work on what role the Bible has played. As a way to continue to introduce the present project, I will briefly discuss two examples of this examination of the role of Scripture. The two examples are *The Bible: Its Authority and Interpretation in the Ecumenical Movement* from the World Council of Churches (hereafter WCC) and “Scripture as Norm for Our Common Faith” written about the U.S. L/RC dialogue. I chose these two pieces because they offer, in the first case, a broad ecumenical examination and, in the second case, a specific study on the same bilateral dialogue I focus on in this present work.

While there are inherently unique aspects to the place of Scripture in ecumenical dialogue that distinguish it from the role of the church fathers in the same, this section will help to introduce the latter more fully by using the former as a comparison. The first example, on the uses of Scripture in the WCC, demonstrates how the Bible has authority for the WCC’s participating churches, but that since the recent decades have brought newer and various means of interpretation, the meaning of that authority is complicated. The church fathers, on the other hand, do not hold the same kind of authority and so, as we will see in chapters 3 and 4 below, they can be used more freely and creatively. The second example, from the L/RC itself, does not have quite the same complications surrounding the authority of Scripture, since Roman Catholics and Lutherans often agree on the weight of Scripture’s authority in the life of the church. (In saying this I do not mean to oversimplify or gloss over the real differences which remain regarding the different views of the role of the magisterium for interpreting Scripture.)

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purposes, the examination of the use of the Bible in the L/RC will show how the Bible was most helpful in some of the same rounds where the church fathers were most helpful as well, along with the obverse. However, I do not find that the effect is for the same reasons. For instance, the Bible is very helpful in rounds IV, V, and VI but not because the topics were focused on the nature, structure, or practices of the church. Rather the Bible produced helpful common ground for the topics of these rounds because both sides recognized the complexity of the topics and the plausibility and legitimacy of one another’s reading of Scripture on these topics.

The Bible: Its Authority and Interpretation in the Ecumenical Movement

The first piece is a collection of WCC documents ranging from 1948 to 1978 that examines how the Bible has featured in the work of the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC. The Bible acknowledges that the place and role of Scripture in the Ecumenical Movement have been recurring questions since its earliest days. At the 1948 inaugural assembly, the WCC characterized itself as a group of churches which laid claim together to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. In an attempt to expand this, the 1961 assembly produced what is called the “Basis of the World Council of Churches,” which describes the WCC as: “a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”

The “Basis” raised

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the Bible as the somehow explanatory and normative element for confession. *The Bible* is a consideration of how this is the case.

Some of the basic insights about Scripture in ecumenism include that the Bible is an element of unity between the churches since all the churches plead it as authoritative, most noticeably in their claim that it is and contains the Word of God. These insights also include that the churches differ, sometimes significantly, on what that authority means and how it obtains for the life of the church. Thus, the Ecumenical Movement is faced with a complex of issues with regard to the role of Scripture, including Scripture and Tradition, biblical hermeneutics, and biblical authority.  

The coupling of Scripture and Tradition can seem something of a conundrum. However, the WCC has been able to make clarifications and offer ways of thinking about this apparent conundrum that help move the ecumenical task forward. The first point to notice is that no interpretation is removed from a tradition; every interpretive effort draws on a particular history which displays its own set of interpretive assumptions and processes. The 1963 Montreal Faith and Order report *Scripture, Tradition and Traditions* laid out the distinction between Tradition (with a capital “T”) and traditions (with a lower-case “t”). As *The Bible* states, “It proved helpful to differentiate between Tradition …, meaning the Gospel itself transmitted from generation to generation in and by the Church, and traditions …, meaning the churches’ diverse expression of the one Tradition.” Thus, tradition was to be understood, “not as a sum of tenets fixed once and for all and transmitted from generation to generation, but rather as a living reality, God’s

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20 There is a fourth issue which *The Bible* adds to the list, the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. This is an important question, but it is not one that reveals any helpful comparison to this study’s examination of the fathers. So, I omit it from the discussion below.

21 *The Bible*, 2.
revelation in Christ and its course through history.” As a consequence, the Montreal report demonstrates that Scripture and Tradition are not two separate entities. Rather, they are interdependent and not authoritative on their own; it was the Tradition, after all, that produced and assembled the scriptures into the Bible.

Just as there have been shifts in understanding the relation between Scripture and Tradition, so too there have been shifts in the area of biblical hermeneutics. An early meeting of the Faith and Order Commission in Wadham College, Oxford, in 1949 focused almost exclusively on the theological presumptions necessary to address the question of proper interpretation. However, following the Montreal report, the Faith and Order Commission convened a meeting in Bristol in 1967 to address what it called the “hermeneutical problem” for the Ecumenical Movement. The report from this meeting did not address the theological presumptions necessary for interpretation in any way; instead, it foregrounded two elements of the exegetical enterprise as it was unfolding at the time: first, that the Bible was a collection of human writings and second, that there is potentially contradictory diversity within the Bible that may demand choosing one portion over against another.

Finally, because of the shifts in hermeneutical studies, a number of unresolved questions have been raised about the issue of Biblical authority. The change in emphasis from the Wadham to Bristol reports, for instance, has unsettled the authority of the Bible in some ways by laying one biblical tradition against another in the name of diversity. Moreover, while the exegetical work done by members of various traditions may be quite similar, there are obvious differences among those traditions when it comes to applying

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22 The Bible, 2.
the texts to the lives of churches. Lastly, again, while every church tradition recognizes
the historical distance between the worlds of the original texts and their interpretations,
not every church tradition agrees on what importance that distance really has or even
whether it needs attention at all.

In response to questions such as these, the Faith and Order Commission met in
Louvain in 1971 and received a report from WCC study groups entitled “The Authority
of the Bible.” The foremost conclusion from this report was that the authority of the
Bible does not rest in its character as either a literary or historical set of texts. This is
because the Bible serves as a central way through which people in the church participate
in faith. Likewise, the way in which the authority of the Bible is understood is variable
since not all churches acknowledge the same set of texts: not all churches adhere to the
same canon. Finally, “The Authority of the Bible” directly faced the issue of inspiration.
Until this report, inspiration had not been explicitly discussed. But “The Authority of the
Bible” offered a significant contribution. Previously, inspiration had been seen as a
presupposition to biblical authority. For “The Authority of the Bible,” inspiration is the
result of the experience of faith instead of an a priori to biblical authority. As the report
states, “the assertion of inspiration is based on the experience that the Bible and its
message have proved themselves authoritative.” 23 In all of these cases, “The Authority of
the Bible” proposed less fixed and more fluid answers to the questions than previous
WCC reports had offered.

In The Bible, the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC addresses three major
topics concerning the role of the scriptures in the Ecumenical Movement. It

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23 The Bible, 7.
accomplishes this by tracing the brief history of reports that have dealt with Scripture and Tradition, hermeneutics, and biblical authority. Doing so, *The Bible* speaks in generalities that are accessible to a wide audience of ecumenical participants. As mentioned above, this examination shows that Scripture carries authority for the churches of the WCC, but that the newer methods of interpretation have complicated the meaning of that authority. The church fathers, on the other hand, do not have such authority, so their use (as we will see in subsequent chapters) is freer and more creative.

“Scripture as Norm for Our Common Faith”

The second example for our consideration narrows the examination considerably, though not losing sight of the larger scope of issues. John Reumann and Joseph Fitzmyer’s “Scripture as Norm for Our Common Faith” is a reflection of how the Bible features in the U.S. L/RC dialogue. The essay stops its work with the eighth round of the dialogue because the ninth round was due for publication soon after “Scripture and Norm” was written and was to deal with the issue of Scripture and Tradition under the rubric “The Word of God.”

Reumann and Fitzmyer’s analysis reveals that the L/RC dialogue uses the scriptures in different ways and with greater and lesser effect in various rounds. There is a similar use of the Bible in L/RC I (*The Status of the Nicene Creed as Dogma of the Church*) and L/RC III (*The Eucharist as Sacrifice*), and there is a similar effect as well. In these rounds, material from the Bible highlights aspects of the topic, but does not offer material that could definitively resolve the remaining disputes between Lutherans and Catholics. In the first case, L/RC I recognizes the central role of scriptural interpretation
in the formulation of the creed; the Arians may have had a more sound exegesis of a few specific passages, but the fathers at Nicaea worked to gather together the whole scope of scripture in their creedal formulations. However, in describing the process of the Nicene formulation and in raising subsequent doctrinal development, L/RC I does not claim that the Bible holds answers as to how doctrine ought to develop. This is also the case with L/RC III; the dialogue uses the Bible to help lay out the bases for later issues concerning the presence of Christ. More constructively, L/RC III does not use the scriptures to argue in any way for either traditional Lutheran or Catholic positions. Additionally, this third round’s use of the Bible helps to highlight an issue that has become very contentious for both sides, namely the office of ministry.

It is just this issue that the dialogue took up in the fourth through sixth rounds, which arguably produced the freshest and most fruitful role for the Bible in the dialogue. L/RC IV, *Eucharist and Ministry*, treated the biblical material concerning the ministry very carefully, spurring conversation during the dialogue round about such topics as the development of ordination and the operation of apostolic succession. And, as “Scripture as Norm” states, “Granted, Lutheran and Catholic differences stem from the situation in the sixteenth century, involving long centuries of postbiblical development; nonetheless, the biblical witness provided a common meeting ground on which there was considerable agreement that has permeated the entire discussion.”

L/RC V, *Papal Primacy and the Universal Church*, occasioned ancillary studies (one biblical, one patristic), the scriptural one of which presented an array of images and understandings of Peter when facing the question of biblical warrants for the papacy. This study forced both parties to reconsider

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24 Reumann and Fitzmyer, “Scripture as Norm,” 90.
their traditional positions: the Lutherans, because there was more material about Peter than earlier thought; and the Catholics, because not all of this material was positive. In the end, the motif of “the Petrine function” was created in order to demonstrate the deep amount of material about Peter can be newly perceived. L/RC VI, *Teaching Authority and Infallibility in the Church*, used the scriptures to examine these historically divisive topics anew. The result was that a context was given for a variegated understanding of these issues. Jesus Christ and the Gospel were recognized as authorities that were proclaimed by witnesses, set down in Scripture, animated by the Spirit, distilled in the Rule of Faith, and served by Ministers.25

There are also rounds in the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue that show how both sides have seen the same biblical material in the same ways on one issue but have seen the same data differently on another issue. The first is reflected in L/RC II, *One Baptism for the Remission of Sins*. Here the biblical material yields an initial and basic profile of baptism about which both Lutherans and Catholics agree; that it is, in large part, a means of initiation into the church. The second is reflected in L/RC VIII, *The One Mediator, the Saints, and Mary*. From almost the beginning of L/RC VIII, the biblical examination was unclear: unclear in what the examination was to produce, and unclear in how and where to present the conclusions in the final Statement. According to “Scripture as Norm,” this is for two main reasons. First, the disparity of positions between Lutherans and Catholics on the piety regarding the saints and Mary has resulted in corresponding disparity of biblical hermeneutic. Second, there was a desire among some dialogue committee members to move beyond the historical critical examination of the biblical

25 Reumann and Fitzmyer, “Scripture as Norm,” 91.
text. But this raised questions of method that were simply unanswerable in the context of the dialogue itself; that is, there were reservations about how serviceable the historical-critical method had become, and other (non-exclusive) options were available: literary-critical, feminist, and “pre-critical” exegesis.26

Finally, the dialogue’s use of scriptural material produced a dual effect in the course of one round alone. In L/RC VII, *Justification by Faith*, the biblical examination yielded a unitive aspect when it delved into a study of the phrase “righteousness of God.” The earlier incompatible views of righteousness between Lutherans and Catholics have been transcended due to the agreement that the biblical phrase is focused on the element of the relationship between God and humanity. However, the biblical examination was not able to help resolve the problem posed by the Lutheran insistence that the doctrine of justification is the article by which the church stands or falls, since there are many more images of the gospel in Paul’s writings than simply justification.

Thus, “Scripture as Norm” provides a summary view of the place of the Bible in the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue through the first eight rounds. I will be attempting a similar examination of the church fathers, though there are some significant differences between my work and that of “Scripture as Norm.” One difference is that there are two further rounds of the dialogue for my consideration: one on Scripture and Tradition and another on the placement of the church’s ministers in the community of the church as it goes about its task of being the community of salvation. Another difference is that the church fathers do not have the same status of authority in the churches as do the Scriptures. As mentioned above, the L/RC uses the Bible to helpful effect in some of

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26 Reumann and Fitzmyer, “Scripture as Norm,” 106.
the same rounds it uses the fathers so. But these are for different reasons. In the first
case, for instance, the L/RC uses the Bible as common ground for addressing the topics
of rounds IV, V, and VI, acknowledging that the topics are multifaceted and that the two
sides’ interpretations of Scripture are plausible and legitimate. In the second case, the
L/RC uses the fathers very directly to address these topics because they are inherently
related to the nature, structure, or practices of the church.

Conclusion

This first chapter has laid out a number of items in order to introduce the reader to
the focus of this work on the use of the church fathers in the U.S. L/RC and all the issues
that are involved in such an examination, from an examination of the sixteenth century
where many of the divisions between these two churches began, to the rise of the
ecumenical movement and the place of communion ecclesiology within, to the many
categories I have devised in order to characterize the uses of the fathers in these
ecumenical conversations, to (finally) some of the conclusion regarding the usefulness of
the church fathers for ecumenical work. This chapter has also included a quick
examination of the use of Scripture in ecumenical work, for the purposes of comparison
with the fathers. Now that this introduction is complete, it is time to move on to the first
piece, an examination of the sixteenth century.
CHAPTER 2
THE FATHERS IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Introduction

As this study’s main subject is the use of the church fathers in ecumenical conversations, and as the particular presentation will be the use of the fathers in U.S. Lutheran-Catholic dialogue, the present chapter will examine the ways in which the fathers were used during the sixteenth century. This examination will give us a perspective from which to compare the use of the fathers in later chapters wherein I take up the first ten rounds of the U.S. dialogue. As we shall see in this chapter, the use of the fathers by Lutherans and Catholics in the sixteenth century is both similar to and different from the use of the fathers in contemporary ecumenical dialogue. This introduction will first present the three episodes from the sixteenth century I have chosen for examination and then explain the similarities and differences between the sixteenth century and the current ecumenical situation.

The first episode is comprised of the exchange engendered by the proposal of the German Reformers’ Augsburg Confession (hereafter, CA, using the customary abbreviation based on the Latin title Confessio Augustana) presented at the Diet of Augsburg to Emperor Charles V in 1530. This elicited the response of the Catholic party
known as the *Confutation of the Augsburg Confession* (hereafter, *Confutation*) quickly written later that same year, which in turn provoked Philip Melanchthon’s own *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* (hereafter, *Apology*) presented to Charles V. In this exchange each side made distinctive use of the fathers. The Lutherans used the fathers as scripturally corroborative authorities. That is, they read the fathers as authentic defenders of the faith on a particular issue insofar as they were themselves faithful interpreters of Scripture. Additionally, the Lutherans used the fathers as evidence that their positions were in concert with the ancient church, from which they deemed the Catholic Church to have strayed. Both of these maneuvers were made in order to solidify the authority of the Lutheran position and to plead their case against the authority of the Catholic Church.

For the Catholics, we learn from Ralph Keen, “the Fathers were employed as champions of orthodoxy first and foremost. As such they possessed an importance in the formation of doctrine that softened the boundaries between the ‘primary’ literature of Scripture and the ‘secondary’ resources of the written tradition.”

Thus the Catholics are using the fathers as sources that corroborate the teaching authority of the Church, and for the purpose of trying to convince the splintering Reformers to accept that authority. From this exchange we will see that the fathers were used as evidences of support directly in the arguments that the two sides posed to one another. It should be noted that in at least the first part of this exchange, between the *CA* and the *Confutation*, there was some hope that the two sides would find some resolution and reunion, albeit a slim and short-lived hope.

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The second episode will be the same sort of examination of the next generation’s exchange. Between 1545 and 1563 the Roman Church held intermittently sessions of the Council of Trent. This was by Catholic estimation the nineteenth ecumenical council of the Church and it took up a wide array of subjects for reform within the Catholic Church and defense of Catholic positions against various Protestant churches. Trent elicited many reactions, one being the extensive and rigorous *Examination of the Council of Trent* (hereafter, *Examination*) from one of Philip Melanchthon’s own students, Martin Chemnitz. Again, in each of these the fathers are used argumentatively. Notwithstanding, there is a distinction between this exchange’s use of the fathers and the previous, since here the texts of Trent and Chemnitz were not texts meant to persuade, but to uphold. That is, with the *CA* and its *Confutation* and *Apology*, there were particular interlocutors with whom each of these texts was to engage. However, with Trent and Chemnitz’s *Examination*, the texts were meant as internal teaching and theology, Catholic and Lutheran respectively.

The final episode will illustrate some of the ways in which these differences in use of the fathers became extremely contentious and combative. Here we have intentionally adversarial histories of the church: first from a Lutheran perspective, second from a Catholic one. Since the very beginning of the Lutheran movement, there have been competing understandings of what Lutheran identity meant and what true Reformational positions should be taken. Among the Lutherans was Matthias Flacius (1520-75), a second-generation Reformer who was at odds with Melanchthon over the latter’s conciliarist postures toward the papacy. While on the faculty at Magdeburg, he was a main force behind and proponent of the *Magdeburg Centuries* (largely written by
others known as the Magdeburg Centuriators). This work was an attempt at sectioning the history of the church neatly into centuries with the express purpose of defending Lutheran views of doctrine throughout. In direct response to this came the *Annales Ecclesiastici* of the Catholic Cesare Baronius (1538-1607). This was an attempt at just the contrary, a history of the church, this time in yearly sections, according to and in defense of the Catholic Church. Here I will comment on these as phenomena that have colored subsequent centuries’ views of how the church’s history can be written polemically. That is, these histories were written precisely to argue that the fathers would have agreed with either the Lutheran or Catholic side of the debate over and against the other, if they had had the opportunity.

In these three episodes there is a trajectory of the rival senses of authority the Reformers and Catholics gave to the church fathers. Beginning with the first episode, the Reformers argued for the authority of the fathers *because they see in them prime witnesses of adherence to and coherence with Scripture*. The Catholics argued for the authority of the fathers *because they see in them corroborators of the teaching authority of the church*; they are so as part of the complex tradition of the church, a tradition that the church is responsible to interpret and hand on. These positions were essentially codified during the second episode, and mainly for internal purposes (i.e., by the time of the second episode, any hope of real engagement between the two sides was lost). Eventually, with the third episode, a great polemic arose for each side in their massive church history projects. Here the fathers were marshaled as pieces of each side’s ecclesial edifice, that each side might be fortified against the other. The obvious end of this trajectory is that the fathers are used in arguments to defend either the Reformers’ or
the Catholics’ position and not used for any kind of common enterprise, such as ecumenism.

There are also similarities and differences between the sixteenth century and the current ecumenical situation. The first episode is similar to the current situation, for Lutherans and Catholics, in that, while each side made distinctive use of the fathers, they were using the fathers as sources in real and immediate exchanges with one another. This first episode is unlike the current situation in that both sides, at least at the very beginning (arguably even until the Peace of Augsburg), were dealing with the authority of the Roman Church. In the second episode the characteristic uses of the fathers for Lutherans and Catholics were not much changed. However, the situation had. The second episode is similar to the current situation in that the two churches were separated, with the Lutherans creating their own judicatories. It is unlike the current situation in that the two sides were not meeting directly with one another in order to have conversations about what might lead to reconciliation and reunion.

The third episode is not like the current situation much at all. That is, there are not Lutherans and Catholics currently participating in historical projects whose aims are to legitimate their own positions as those “really” carried on through church history to the detriment of the opposing side, which would have been a false alternative to this true history. However, this is not to say that these historical projects from this third episode have not had their effect. As Jonathan Z. Smith argues in his book Drudgery Divine (and as we will see below in our own discussion of the third episode), the assumptions undergirding such historical projects have embedded themselves in the Protestant and Catholic perceptions of one another from the time of these projects to well into the
twentieth century. Smith describes how the Protestant version of these historical projects argues that there was an original, pristine church based on a purity of faith of the believers and that this pristine church became corrupt through the introduction of a hierarchy and fixed institution. This Protestant version maintains that hierarchy and institution were borrowed from elements of the pagan world, elements that were not purely Christian. The goal for such a history is to show that a version of this pristine church somehow continued through history and has been brought to full bloom in the advent of Protestantism.

For the sixteenth century, the fathers were largely used as a source for supporting and bolstering the positions of both sides of the Reformation on particular issues. Both the Reformers and the Catholics used the fathers in various ways, not only from one another, but also within their own churches over time. In other words, the Reformers and Catholics shifted their usages of the fathers as the sixteenth century progressed. In both cases, the seminal use of the fathers in this century is what I have called ‘argumentative’ and not ‘historical’. That is, the fathers are brought to bear in the Reformation discussions as sources to support and defend a particular argument on a given issue, not as sources for constructing histories that served as background for an argument, as later occurred.

29 Smith, Drudgery, 1-35 and 114-15. While Smith does not directly address a corresponding Catholic version, it is likewise problematic to maintain that there is a straightforward progression of doctrine and practice that simply builds upon former expressions and instantiations without reform.
Augsburg Confession, the Roman Confutation, and the Apology

This episode of the exchange engendered by the Reformers’ Augsburg Confession, the Roman Confutation of the Augsburg Confession, and the Reformers’ Apology of the Augsburg Confession is chosen for three reasons. First, it was a very early exchange, from 1530-31. This gives us a sense of these initial impressions of each side for the other. Second, and related to the first, there was hope (at least for the Reformers) that the impending division could yet be undone and overcome. As we will see below in the examination of the historical situation, this hope may have been very brief and fleeting. But it was present, at least in the time of the Augsburg Confession and the Roman Confutation. Third, because of these first two, the treatment of the fathers by each side was distinct from the other, but not necessarily at odds with one another.

The Historical Situation

On June 25, 1530 the CA was read at the Diet of Augsburg to Emperor Charles V as a means of presenting the positions of the Reformers in two parts. The first (Articles I to XXI) is a set of doctrinal points from the Lutheran perspective, the second (Articles XXII to XXVIII) is a list of abuses for which the Lutherans thought remedy was necessary. On August 3, the Catholic response, the Confutation, was read to the diet, against which Philip Melanchthon wrote his Apology. In all three documents the church fathers are referenced, and noteworthy is the difference between the Lutheran texts and the Catholic text on the manner in which the fathers are referenced. For every case, the

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30 It is interesting to note that the Confutation was not actually published until 1559, but the stenographers at the Diet had been accurate enough, it turns out, for Melanchthon to write an informed Apology based on their notes.
fathers are used ‘argumentatively’. That is, they are integral to whichever side’s defense of a theological or doctrinal point. However, the Lutheran texts use the fathers in greater amounts than the Confutation. This is because the Lutherans needed to repel the accusation that they were embarked on a ‘new’ theological enterprise, novel from the church’s tradition.\footnote{Here the Lutheran Reformers were keen to distinguish themselves from both the Anabaptists and the earliest Reformed congregations led and inspired by Ulrich Zwingli.} It was incumbent upon them to prove their positions from within the heritage of the church itself. So the Reformers used the fathers as defense against the charge of novelty. By contrast, the Confutation refers to the fathers less than the CA and certainly less than the Apology (which is by far the longest text of the three); and where the Lutheran texts refer to the fathers, the Confutation relies more heavily on Scripture and on canons and decrees from previous councils. When using the fathers, the Catholics used them to maintain the authority of the Church to teach and make judgments regarding this splinter group of Reformers.

For this section I will explore the Articles of the CA, the Confutation, and the Apology where the fathers are referenced by both the Lutherans and the Catholics. They are in two clusters. The first comes from the first of the CA’s two parts (on doctrinal points) and includes Articles VII and VIII (on the church). The second is from the second part (on abuses) and includes XXII (on communion in both kinds), XXIV (concerning the Mass), XXVI (on foods), and XXVIII (on ecclesiastical power).

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the use of the fathers was largely an effort by reformers, both Lutheran and Catholic, to contend with the heritage of
scholasticism from the medieval ages. This was an effort taken up by both Reformers like Luther and Catholics like Erasmus, the common element being the humanistic endeavor to “return to the sources.” As Leif Grane notes, the “[l]ack of interest in scholastic theology and engagement in the fathers was not new, but the militant tone was.” And while the leaders of the charge against the scholastics included Luther and Erasmus, Philip Melanchthon joined the fray, advocating “[t]he church fathers are of a different and higher order than scholastic doctors, and to praise them is the same as being openminded and listening to Erasmus … and Luther.” The commonality in purpose and effort, however, drew to a swift close with the promulgation of Exsurge Domine, the papal bull that proposed excommunication for Luther in 1520. After this, those Catholics who proposed reform of the church based on patristic grounds over against scholastic grounds needed to negotiate this argument within the Roman Church. The Reformers, on the other hand, were simply left to defend both their return to the early church and their newfound ecclesial realities. That is to say, while the Catholics who made use of the fathers were able to do so within the Roman Church and its structures of authority, the Reformers had to do so outside the Roman Church, effectively needing to legitimate their presentation of the Christian faith vis-à-vis the fathers. In this way, the Reformers used the fathers as sources that legitimated their own understanding of the Christian faith.

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This is important background for this chapter, because it offers a context within which to view the following contentions. The key here is to notice that both the Lutheran side and a portion of the Catholic side had a manner of laying claim to the fathers *together* (i.e., against scholasticism), before they laid claim to them *separately* and, to be sure, *antagonistically*.

The final point I will make in this section is that there was a kind of attempt at unity in the exchange between the *Augsburg Confession* and the *Confutation*. By the time of Melanchthon’s *Apology*, the moment for institutional unity had passed. But before that time these two documents are honest and earnest attempts at unity, though each in their own way.

The *CA* by its very name distinguishes it from other texts that had been written as defenses of theological positions in the history of the church. As Wenzel Lohff describes, “The teaching of the [CA] is not conceived as the dogma of a theological party or even of a new ‘church,’ but rather as the right doctrine of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.”35 The *Augsburg Confession*, then, is a confession that what is being stated as belief is based in and reflects the belief of the one true church that finds its basis in the apostolic and ancient church; the Reformers did not view the text as a defense of a position that was somehow over and against the Church, but rather as a statement of that which they saw as belief common between both sides. Thus, the *CA* itself states, “Since, then, this teaching is clearly grounded in Holy Scripture and is, moreover, neither against nor contrary to the universal Christian church – or even the Roman church – so far as can

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be observed in the writing of the Fathers, we think that our opponents cannot disagree with us in the articles set forth above.”36 This confession was offered in writing and read to the emperor and to the church authorities of the day for discussion, debate, and hopeful endorsement.37 It was a part of the Reformers’ attempt at dialogue with the Catholics.

In reply, the Catholic Church read its *Confutation* at the Diet of Augsburg, but a written copy was denied the Reformers upon their request. The emperor accepted the *Confutation*, thereby rejecting the Reformers’ position that what they saw as abuses should be rectified and that the German churches should have some autonomy in governance. The fact that the *Confutation* cites disagreements with the Reformers’ *Confession* and that the emperor accepted it does not mean that it was not part of a dialogue process. Nor does it mean that the Catholic attitude was thoroughly polemical and negative. Indeed, the situation could have been worse.38 Johannes Eck, the lead Catholic theologian at the Diet, had already prepared his *Four Hundred and Four Articles*, an encompassing text that attempted to address all of what the Catholic Church saw as heretical positions of various Reformers, not just the Lutherans. The Catholics at the Diet decided *not* to move ahead with something like Eck’s piece which would have been extremely negative and harmful to the situation, but instead to address the *Confession* itself and on its own terms. So, the Catholics at the Diet were truly

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attempting some kind of dialogue with the Reformers. Unfortunately, with the emperor’s acceptance of the *Confutation* and decision to demand Lutheran obedience (which included his refusal even to accept and read Melanchthon’s *Apology to the Augsburg Confession*) this earliest moment for *rapprochement* was lost.

Examination of the *Augsburg Confession*, the *Confutation*, and the *Apology*

The Articles of the *CA* listed above will be taken in three collections: first, on the church; second, on Communion in both kinds and the Mass; third, on food and ecclesiastical power. While the two articles on communion and the Mass are from the first and second parts of the *CA*, respectively, they hang together because of their subject matter. Here the Reformers used the fathers as sources that corroborate the Reformers’ own reading of Scripture. They used these sources as defenses against various charges of novelty or disobedience by showing how their own understanding is not at odds with the fathers but supported by them. Additionally, the Catholics used the fathers as sources that corroborate the teaching authority of the Church. They used these sources in order to engage and try to convince, in their view, the splinter group, the Reformers.

In the *Confutation* to *CA* VII there are presuppositions that get in the way of interpretation and understanding. *CA* VII is titled Concerning the Church. Here the church is described as “the assembly of saints in which the gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly.”\(^{39}\) The *Confutation* attempts to confute by taking issue with the term ‘saints’. If the *CA* means that the church is solely comprised of holy people who are in perfect union with God, then it is mistaken. As the *Confutation* states,

“The seventh article of their confession, which affirms that the church is an assembly of saints, cannot pass without close examination, if by this they mean that wicked persons and sinners are to be separated from the church.” But Melanchthon defends the CA in his Apology by pointing out that the Confutation misunderstands the very next Article, VIII, which answers the question “what is the church?” As Melanchthon writes, “For this very reason [that statements may be misrepresented] we added the eighth article, so that no one might think that we separate the wicked and the hypocrites from the outward fellowship of the church or deny efficacy to the sacraments when administered by hypocrites or the wicked.” Here the CA makes just the distinction which the Confutation rightly raises and the CA agrees with the point. So, what is going on here?

The key issue has to do with the true identity of the church. For the Lutherans, the church is not understood as “an external government of certain nations.” Instead it is “people scattered throughout the entire world who agree on the gospel and have the same Christ, the same Holy Spirit, and the same sacraments, whether or not they have the same human traditions.” Melanchthon claims that these human traditions extend even to such celebrations as Easter, the specific timing of which is a matter of human discernment and adjudication for the sake of concord among the believers, not a divine mandate. The Confutation agrees, but makes a distinction between local ecclesial custom and universal ecclesial custom, and it could mean nothing else by universal ecclesial custom than that custom overseen by the pope.

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40 Sources and Contexts, 110.
41 Apology VII and VIII, BC, 174.
42 Apology VII and VIII, BC, 175.
43 Apology VII and VIII, BC, 175.
44 Apology VII and VIII, BC, 182.
In defense of the Lutheran position, Melanchthon cites two patristic sources, using them as sources in defense of variations in traditions within the church. On the point regarding the makeup of the church, he cites Jerome On the Epistle to the Ephesians 5.24, “The sinner, therefore, who has been defiled by any spot cannot be called part of the church of Christ, nor can he be said to be subject to Christ.”\(^{45}\) This he does to defend the position that there are people who are in the church in both name and fact and those in name only. On the point regarding the observance of customs, he quotes Epiphanius’ Panarion 70.10 in reference to the Council of Nicaea on dating Easter, “Do not calculate, but celebrate it whenever your brethren of the circumcision do; celebrate it with them at the same time, and even though they have erred, do not let this trouble you.”\(^{46}\) In defense of the Catholic position, the Confutation also cites two sources. But this is done to support the distinction between local and universal custom. Here the Confutation uses the fathers as a defense of the ecclesial hierarchy. For the local, Jerome is likewise cited, only this time it is from one of his letters, Epistle 71.6, “Every province abounds in its own sense (of propriety).”\(^{47}\) For the universal, Augustine is cited when it claims, “[a]ll believers must observe the universal rites, as Augustine, whose testimony they [the Lutherans] often cite, so splendidly taught.”\(^{48}\) The characteristic perspectives of the two sides are on display in full here; the Lutherans are using the fathers to defend a more particular and local expression of the church, while the Catholics are using the fathers to defend a more universal and global expression.

\(^{45}\) Quoted from Apology VII and VIII, BC, 175.
\(^{46}\) Quoted from Apology VII and VIII, BC, 182.
\(^{47}\) Quoted from Confutation in Sources and Contexts, 111.
\(^{48}\) Confutation, Sources and Contexts, 111 with reference to Augustine’s Ep. 54, ad inquisitions Ianuarii 1.1.1.
The telltale sign for the difference in perspective comes in the *Confutation*’s response to Article VIII, What is the Church? This is the Article of the *CA* that Melanchthon defends in the *Apology* as the engagement with the *Confutation*’s critique of Article VII, Concerning the Church. Article VIII of the *CA* was intended as a fuller explanation of Article VII by demonstrating that the Lutherans knew full well that the church was not comprised solely of saints, in the sense that saints are those utterly righteous Christians without sin in any way. However, the Catholics took Article VIII to be speaking not of the church’s population in general as well as the ordained, but of the church’s clergy only. Thus, the *Confutation* condemns “the Donatists and Origenists … the Waldensians and the Poor of Lyons … John Wycliffe in England and John Hus in Bohemia.”

The two Articles on the Eucharist that make use of the fathers are from the second part of the *CA*, on abuses. This in itself shows a concern for the Eucharist as a practice in the life of the church; the argument between the Lutherans and Catholics did not center on the theology of the Eucharist while overlooking the ritual. Article XXII, Concerning Both Kinds in the Lord’s Supper, takes up the abuse, from the Lutheran perspective, of priests withholding the cup at the Eucharist. The laity were only receiving the bread, and as the *CA* states, “Now it is obvious that this custom, introduced contrary to God’s command and to the ancient canons, is not right.”

The Lutherans argued that all Christians should receive both the bread and the wine as a matter of course when

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49 *Confutation, Sources and Contexts*, 111-112.

50 *BC*, 62
celebrating the Eucharist. The Catholics maintained that the laity should only receive the bread, and not the wine, and that the priests should receive both.

The defense of the Lutheran position tells us two things, both deriving from an essential basis, namely that Christ himself at the Last Supper commanded that the disciples receive both bread and wine. The first point from this is that the Lutherans took the disciples to represent the whole church, not simply the hierarchy. Thus all members of the church are to receive both kinds. The second point is that when the CA and the Apology make use of the fathers and the early church, it is not doing so merely as an historical exercise in evidence-gathering. Instead, the Lutherans are referencing examples from the early church of those who were obedient to the command of Christ. This is the main point of the Lutheran use of patristic evidence in this instance. In this case, the Reformers are using the fathers as corroborative examples of reading scripture in an expansively literal way. That is, the Reformers take as the basis for distributing both bread and wine the Last Supper scenes and all other references to bread to be shorthand for this. Both the CA and the Apology claim that no canon, ancient or medieval, can be found to argue for withholding the cup. This is to say that there is no evidence of the church formally reneging on Christ’s own command. Indeed, the CA itself states:

Moreover, this usage remained in the church for a long time, as can be demonstrated from the historical accounts and from the writings of the Fathers. Cyprian mentions in many places that the cup was given to the laity in his time. St. Jerome says that the priests who administer the sacrament distribute the blood of Christ to the people. … Not a single canon with the order to receive only one kind can be found. Nobody knows when or through whom this custom of
receiving only one kind was introduced, although Cardinal Cusanus mentions when this custom was formally approved [at Lateran IV].^^51

Here are references to Cyprian’s Epistle 57.2 and Jerome’s Commentary on Zephaniah c. 3. The Apology gives the same citations and adds the Council of Toledo (633), canon 7.

The defense of the Catholic position likewise betrays two things. For the Catholics, when Christ commanded the disciples at the Last Supper, he was commanding the leadership of the church, i.e., the priests, to partake in both kinds. Second, the patristic evidence, according to the Confutation, that supports communing the laity only with the bread comes from – in contrast to the Reformers’ expansively literal reading – a restrictively literal reading of the texts and their use of the term ‘bread’ to refer to communion. For instance, the Confutation claims just this in commenting on Luke 24:30-31:

Augustine, Chrysostom, Theophylact, and Bede – some of whom lived not long after the time of the apostles – affirm that the Eucharist is being spoke of here. It should be noted that in John 6 [:32-35] Christ mentions only the bread. St. Ignatius, a disciple of St. John the Evangelist, mentions the bread alone in his letter to the Ephesians [Epistola ad Ephesios 1,20]. Similarly, Ambrose, in his books on the sacraments, speaks of ‘the communion of the laity.’ [De sacramentis 4,4,14-19]^52

The Lutheran claims concerning authority from the fathers arise from the Confutation’s restrictively literal and not expansively literal reading. The Confutation admits that the early church did in fact commune under both kinds, but that from early on “because of many dangers, this custom has been discontinued.”^^53 This leads into medieval parsing of the doctrine that Christ is not divided in the division of the two kinds.

^^51 BC, 60 and 62.
^^52 Sources and Contexts, 120-1.
^^53 Sources and Contexts, 121.
Article XXIV, Concerning the Mass, similarly illuminates characteristic positions by the Lutherans and Catholics. These positions stem from differences in how each side understands the doctrine of and practices surrounding concomitance, which claims that body and blood of Christ are fully present in each of the consecrated bread and wine and, consequently, that the recipients of the Eucharist can be assured of Christ’s full presence in either bread or wine. The CA argues against the Eucharist as sacrifice, that is, against a misunderstanding that Christ is sacrificed anew in each Eucharist, and against an understanding of *ex opere operato* that would minimize or abnegate the role of faith. The CA states, “Now if the mass blots out the sins of the living and the dead *ex opere operato*, justification comes from the work of the Mass, not from faith, which Scripture does not allow.”

These critiques stem largely from the abuses of private Masses. John Chrysostom is cited to emphasize an understanding the Eucharist as Communion, where all those present at the Mass are communed – under both kinds. In his *Homilies on Ephesians*, Homily 3, Chrysostom urges that believers take care to prepare themselves appropriately before “partaking of Christ’s Body,” and that the priest is responsible for commending some to the Eucharist while dissuading others. The Reformers use this passage in order to stress the importance of conscious participation in the Communion of

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54 *BC*, 71.

55 “Now since the Mass is not a sacrifice for others, living or dead, to take away their sins but should be a Communion where the priest and others receive the sacrament for themselves, we celebrate it in this fashion. On holy days and at other times when communicants are present, Mass is celebrated, and those who desire it receive the sacrament. Thus, the Mass remains among us in its proper use, as it was observed formerly in the church. This can be demonstrated from St. Paul (I Cor. 11[:22-33]) and from many writings of the Fathers. For Chrysostom tells how the priest stands every day and invites some to receive the sacrament, but forbids others to approach [*Homilies of Ephesians*, Homily 3]. The ancient canons also indicate that one priest officiated and gave the sacrament to the other priests and deacons. For the words of the Nicene canon read: ‘After the priests, the deacons shall receive the sacrament from the bishop or priest in order’ [Canon 18 of Nicea in 325]” (BC, 70).

the Eucharist, though Chrysostom himself does not delineate as cleanly as the Reformers might the difference between sacrifice and Communion since in this very same passage he speaks of them together. Nevertheless, the Reformers’ accentuation is clear.

Likewise, the Reformers argued that the Mass is to be celebrated so that believers can know the effect of the benefits of the Eucharist upon them. As the CA argues, “The Mass, therefore, was instituted so that the faith of those who use the sacrament should recall what benefits are received through Christ and should encourage and console the anxious conscience.”\(^{57}\) In doing so, the CA cites Ambrose of Milan who writes in his \textit{De sacramentis} V.4.25, “Receive daily what is of benefit to you daily! So live that you may deserve to receive it daily … He who has a wound requires medicine. The fact that we are under sin is the wound; the medicine is the heavenly and venerable sacrament.”\(^{58}\) Further, in defense of these views generally, the CA states, “No novelty has been introduced that did not exist in the church in the days of old.”\(^ {59}\) So, here the Reformers were using the fathers in defense of an ecclesial custom against the charge of novelty.

The Catholic reply spends the majority of its effort responding to the Lutheran claims about sacrifice. The Catholic view is that Christ is in fact offered as a sacrifice in the Mass. This is upheld in the \textit{Confutation} with references to Augustine and Jerome. The \textit{Confutation} claims, “Augustine [in \textit{De haeresibus} 53] condemned this error in the Arians, who denied that that Mass was a sacrifice for the living and the dead.” But this is not entirely accurate. \textit{De haeresibus} 53 actually accuses the Aërians (named after Aërius,

\(^{57}\) \textit{BC}, 71.  
\(^{58}\) Ambrose of Milan, \textit{De sacramentis} V.4.25, from \textit{Theological and Dogmatic Works}, trans. Roy J. Deferrari (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 317. The line quoted in the \textit{CA} from the same section is, “Because I always sin, I ought always to take the medicine.”  
\(^{59}\) \textit{BC}, 72.
a fourth century presbyter of Pontus) of a number of misdirected beliefs, including “that the Holy Sacrifice ought not be offered for the dead.” These Aërians, who seemed to have died out soon after Aërius’ own death, were also accused of being Arians.

The *Confutation* cites Jerome in order to defend the position of the priests as the ones responsible for offering the sacrifice of the Mass. In commenting on Malachi 3:3-4 (“He [God’s messenger] will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.”), Jerome understands the priests of the church to be the descendants of Levi. The *Confutation* continues with this understanding and argues that the church’s priests are indeed offering the sacrifice of righteousness through the Mass. Here the Catholics are using the fathers as sources corroborative of church authority and in defense of ecclesial hierarchy and its function.

Additionally, Irenaeus is cited among others (Origen, Cyprian, Chrysostom, Basil, and Hilary) who are simply mentioned by name without specifically identifying any of their writings. The citation is from Irenaeus’ *Adversus haereses* 4.17.5, which reads, “Christ taught a new sacrifice in the New Testament, which the church, receiving from the apostles, offers to God throughout the entire world.” The Catholics seem to be assuming that ‘the church’ here refers to the priests, the ones offering the sacrifice,

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61 *Sources and Contexts*, 129.
63 The translation is from *Sources and Contexts*, 130, based on the *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Graece*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (7/1:1023).
though Irenaeus nowhere in this part of the *Adversus haereses* explicitly states as much. Indeed, in this chapter Irenaeus is arguing that God does not need anything from humans, since it is God who acts: “the Father [confesses] the name of Jesus Christ, which is throughout all the world glorified in the Church, to be His own, both because it is that of his son, and because He who thus describes it gave Him for the salvation of men.”64 Nevertheless, the *Confutation* contends, “since the entire catholic church has taught, held, and observed this doctrine from the time of the apostles, it ought to teach and hold the same today.”65 Here we have a clear example of the way the Catholics thought of the fathers as corroborative of the Church’s authority and used them in just that way. Catholic confidence in using the fathers for such support was particularly high when they perceived the fathers to have a kind of consensus on a particular position, as in the present case.

The last two Articles of the CA, XXVI (on foods) and XXVIII (on ecclesiastical power) bring again into relief the Lutheran and Catholic views of the church itself, and the different sense of authority for each. For Lutherans, ecclesiastical power is necessary for the sake of good order in the life of the church, and whatever stipulations come with regard to food (or any other matter) are made only as expressions of the freedom found in the gospel. For Catholics, ecclesiastical power is necessary for the sake of eternal life; stipulations are made for that end, and bishops are given the power to judge whether their subjects are being faithful or not.

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64 *Adversus haereses* 4.17.6 from *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ANF 1, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 484.
65 *Sources and Contexts*, 130.
In CA XXVI, the Reformers focus on food as a representation of what they called “human traditions.” They argue that former teaching has demanded believers treat such customs as fasting and distinctions among foods (abstinence) as necessary observances which have a bearing on their salvation. These teachings, contends the CA, are detrimental on three counts: “the grace of Christ and the teaching concerning faith are thereby obscured,” “such traditions have also obscured God’s commands,” and “such traditions turned out to be a heavy burden to consciences.”

It is on this last point that the Reformers cite Augustine. In his Epistle 54 to Januarius II.2, the bishop of Hippo writes to the priest about the variance in custom from one part of the Christian world to another. His advice is based on a negative assessment, “if it [the custom] is clearly not contrary to the faith nor to sound morality, [it] is to be held as a thing indifferent, and ought to be observed for the sake of fellowship with those among whom we live.” The positive assessment is that there are two kinds of universal observances: those of Scripture (e.g., the sacraments) and those of the church’s authority (e.g., “the annual commemoration, by special solemnities, of the Lord’s passion, resurrection, and ascension, and of the descent of the Holy Spirit from heaven, and whatever else is in like manner observed by the whole Church wherever it has been established.”) With this freedom, the believer’s conscience is not burdened. Further, the Reformers cite Irenaeus from Eusebius, “Diversity in fasting does not dissolve unity in faith.”

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66 BC, 74 and 76.
68 Epistle 54 to Januarius I.1, NPNF 1:1, 300.
69 From Eusebius of Caesarea, Ecclesiastical History V.24.13; quoted from BC, 80.
Reformers are using the church fathers as a defense of ecclesial custom against the charge of disobedience.

In response, the *Confutation* claims that the Lutherans have misread Augustine in his letter to Januarius, when its states, “[The Reformers] falsely cite Augustine who, in his reply to Januarius, says the opposite of what they claim.”\(^70\) The *Confutation* refers to a later passage in the letter, II.3, where Augustine writes, “When I come to Rome, I fast on the Sabbath, but when I am here [in Hippo] I do not.”\(^71\) For the Catholics, this marks the difference between matters that are universally binding and those that are not. The Catholics are concerned that the Lutherans advocate too much freedom regarding customs, to the point that they end up not preaching “the cross, bodily training, and the value of fasting with an eye toward bringing the body under discipline.”\(^72\) The Catholics are using the fathers here as a source corroborating the Church’s teaching authority on what are universally binding customs and what are not.

The *CA* likewise makes reference to Augustine when making its arguments in the rather lengthy Article XXVIII, concerning ecclesiastical power. However, this citation is placed at a crucial point in the argument. In Augustine’s *Concerning the Unity of the Church* 11.28, he writes that no one should obey a bishop when he teaches “contrary to the holy, divine Scripture.”\(^73\) This work is part of Augustine’s engagement with the Donatist bishop Petilian in the early 400s. The bishop from Hippo had a lengthy correspondence with Petilian over an extensive array of issues, ranging from the name in which believers should be baptized to what true love looks like in the church. In citing

\(^70\) *Sources and Contexts*, 133.
\(^71\) Epistle 54 to Januarius II.3, NPNF 1:1, 301.
\(^72\) *Sources and Contexts*, 134.
\(^73\) *BC*, 94.
this piece, the Reformers are likening their position to the Catholic position of ancient
North Africa, claiming that it is the rightful responsibility of the “office of the bishop to
preach the gospel, to forgive sin, to judge doctrine and reject doctrine that is contrary to
the gospel, and to exclude from the Christian community the ungodly whose ungodly life
is manifest – not with human power but the God’s Word alone.” In other words, parishioners owe obedience to bishops as they are in accord with the Word of God, and with regard to spiritual matters only. Here the Reformers are using the fathers to demonstrate a correspondence between themselves and the ancient Catholic view, given the Donatist controversy. This correspondence was meant to resonate with the Catholics of the sixteenth century.

The Confutation argues that those holding ecclesial office are not bound to civil law, but should have their cases taken up in the church itself. In saying so, it refers to Pope Clement the Martyr (Clement of Rome) and Constantine at the Council of Nicaea; the former claims that trouble between presbyters should be settled by presbyters, and the latter holds that the civil realm should not judge ecclesial matters. Even so, the Confutation argues for a division between matters “universally binding” and “indifferent.” The key distinction here is that the Catholic position is advocating a strong sense of authority for the bishop. It is the bishops who would determine which matters are either “universally binding” or “indifferent,” not the gospel mandate of Scripture, since Scripture does not treat all matters of life that humans create for themselves throughout history. The Catholics are using the fathers here as a defense of

74 BC, 94.
75 Sources and Contexts, 138.
76 Sources and Contexts, 133.
the bishop’s function and authority as interpreters of Scriptures who are also responsible for Scripture’s application.

These examples from the CA, the Confutation, and the Apology have illustrated one aspect of the difference in use of the fathers and reference to the early church by Lutherans and Catholics. These examples show that the Lutherans were using the fathers as a way to ward off the charge of novelty by securing evidence from the fathers for their positions. This was not a univocal reference to the patristic era as a source of tradition that by itself would argue for their stance. Rather, they were using the fathers as corroborative sources, corroborative with Scripture, and as such they help defend against the charge of novelty.

Scott H. Hendrix employs the term “deparentification” to shed light on how the early Reformers related to and made use of the fathers. Hendrix argues that the Reformers’ use of the fathers was based on a series of assessments of the fathers resulting in ‘deparentification’, by which he means that the Reformers refused “any longer to attribute inappropriate authority [to a church father and assumed] more responsibility for [themselves].” As Hendrix writes:

The reformers selected support from the fathers not only because it served their apologetic interest to do so, but also because they were secure enough in the biblical grounding of their own theology to choose patristic support if they wished. They were free to acknowledge both the contribution and the limitations of the fathers and to use them as resources accordingly.

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78 Hendrix, “Deparentifying the Fathers,” 57.
79 Hendrix, “Deparentifying the Fathers,” 58.
Hendrix further describes how it could have been the case that the Reformers simply reject the fathers or obsequiously accepted them:

While it may not surprise us that protestant reformers were willing to accept a limited authority of the fathers beneath Scripture, no historical necessity compelled them to adopt that stance. They could have rebelled against the fathers and rejected them completely or they could have submissively sought their support. In either case they would not have used the fathers freely as a resource, but would have felt bound to reject them or obligated to agree with them. What can look like a self-serving or ambivalent attitude toward the fathers can therefore also be read in a more positive way.  

These assessments of the fathers by the Reformers included that the fathers made mistakes, that the Reformers took into account the limits of the fathers, and that the Reformers focused on the fathers’ contributions to evangelical faith and life. As Hendrix describes in full:

In the writings of other reformers we also find statements about the fathers which are characteristic of deparentification. These statements do one or more of the following: 1) they admit that the fathers made mistakes; 2) they acknowledge the limitations under which the fathers lived and wrote; and 3) they recognize the potential contributions which the fathers made to evangelical faith and life. The assertion of patristic error is the basis of Protestant refusals to attribute absolute authority to the fathers. Their mistakes, however, are often attributed to the fact that the fathers worked under limitations or that the problems of the sixteenth century were more difficult than those of the patristic era.

In other words, at root, the Reformers refused *absolute* authority to the church fathers on the basis of patristic error.

The Catholics, on the other hand, were not quite at the point of referring to the fathers as a corpus of the tradition that held authority. As we will see in the next section, this referring to the fathers as a corpus within and representing the tradition is made abundantly clear in the Council of Trent. Instead, the Catholics were focusing at this

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80 Hendrix, “Deparentifying the Fathers,” 58.
81 Hendrix, “Deparentifying the Fathers,” 63.
point on the church as the context in which the authority of the fathers resides. As Ralph Keen states, “In the catholic view, the patristic tradition corroborates the teaching authority of the church, and the church in turn is the sole context in which the Fathers can be appropriately appreciated.”

Keen marks another point further along the line of this distinction when he writes:

The immediate implication of this position [that the Bible as the only norm for the Reformers was itself a product of the church] was that the Bible presupposes the church; methodologically, the catholic stance meant that the theological tradition, having created the biblical canon, was to be regarded as a ‘primary’ source for dogma. The protestant conception, by contrast, held that only Scripture was ‘primary’ and that the patristic tradition, no matter how valuable as a guide to understanding the faith of the church during its formative period, necessarily held a status subordinate to that of Scripture. Since the reformers had at the outset declared Scripture to be the only binding authority for the church, the demonstration, on scriptural grounds, of the impossibility of that position was the first apologetic task of the catholic respondents to Luther.

In this way, the Catholic Church navigated between the kind of reverence for antiquity that the humanists (and Reformers) advocated and simply ignoring antiquity, so that it steered toward the view that “the Fathers of the church were to be valued for their contributions to the structure and practices of the church, which had evolved over the centuries.”

This section has explored how the Reformers and Catholics used the fathers in direct engagement with one another, in the hopes, however fleeting, of some kind of reunion or reconciliation. This was especially the case with the CA and the Confutation. This setting of direct engagement is similar to the contemporary ecumenical setting, however, the difference being that in the sixteenth century Rome claimed religious and

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82 Keen, “The Fathers in Counter-Reformation Theology,” 701.
84 Keen, “The Fathers in Counter-Reformation Theology,” 704.
juridical authority over both sides. We saw how the Reformers used the fathers largely as sources corroborative with Scripture, sources they used to help defend against various charges of novelty or disobedience as they pleaded their case to and against the authority of the Roman Church. We also saw how the Catholics used the fathers as sources corroborative with the teaching authority of the Church, sources they used to engage with and try to convince this splinter group of Reformers to accept their authority. The next section will continue to examine similarities and differences between the sixteenth century and the contemporary ecumenical situations as well as how these basic uses of the fathers became solidified for each side.

_The Council of Trent and Chemnitz’s “Examination”_

In this section we have the exchange reversed from the last. Here we have the Council of Trent and responses to it from the Lutheran side. The main Lutheran response we will inspect is Martin Chemnitz’s *Examination of the Council of Trent*. An additional difference between this exchange and the last, as mentioned above, is that this one is manifestly internally oriented. That is, Trent did not in any way write so as to engage the Reformers, let alone Chemnitz in particular. Likewise, while Chemnitz was responding to Trent, he was not expecting the Roman Church to read his *Examination* and reply in any meaningful way. The two texts were assembled for the express purpose of speaking to their own audiences, positively on the doctrines and practices of their own church and negatively against those of other churches.

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85 I am not taking up the Lutherans’ *Formula of Concord*, the Lutheran document which was formulated in the same time-frame as Trent, because it does not treat Trent. It was much more concerned with how the Lutheran churches could weather the storms of internal division as well as how they could define themselves over and against the other Reformation churches of that period.
Indeed, this is part of why I have chosen these two to represent the second episode under consideration in this section. Trent was clearly the most important event for the Catholic Church in the sixteenth century, shaping and forming identity, accomplished in part by the promulgation of doctrine. Martin Chemnitz was a leading figure in his generation of Lutheran Reformers and was the foremost patristics scholar among them. His work is significant for our examination because he took Trent seriously.

The Historical Situation

The Council of Trent was held intermittently during three periods over the course of almost two decades. Pope Paul III had originally called a council to meet in 1537 in order to address the call for moral and administrative reform in the Church, but various secular and ecclesial resistances arose between then and 13 December 1545 when the Council of Trent finally was convoked. The three periods were 1545-47, 1551-52, and 1562-63 comprising a total of twenty-eight sessions. The periods were interrupted first by severe disagreements between the Pope and Emperor Charles V in 1547, and second by a revolt of princes against Charles in 1552. The Council decided in the first period to address dogma and disciplinary reform concurrently, thus not privileging one over the other but striving to hold up the importance of both for the life of the Church. Some of the reforms were enacted fairly quickly under the authority of the Council itself, while others were given to the authority of the Pope and took some time to bring about. Examples of the latter are the revision of the Vulgate, the issuance of the Catechism, and the revision of the Missal.
Martin Chemnitz (1522-86) was a leading Lutheran scholar of the second generation of Reformers. He had a short career teaching at the University of Wittenberg, but from 1544 onwards, he devoted himself to life in the parish. From this setting he wrote works that defended the Lutheran understanding of the real presence in the Eucharist and explained a Lutheran understanding of the person of Christ. Additionally he was an instrumental leader in drafting the Formula of Concord in 1577, a key text in the Book of Concord. For our purposes, it is important to note that soon after the close of the Council of Trent, Chemnitz began a lengthy attack on the Council in his *Examen concilii Tridentini* which he composed between 1565 and 1573 and fills four volumes.

Examination of the Council of Trent and Chemnitz’s *Examination*

The subjects we will look at here are three. First, since Trent has famously, or infamously, been credited with the proposition of a double source of revelation, we will take up the Scripture/tradition dichotomy, which was addressed in the first period of the Council’s meeting, and in session four. This will only be done, however, to gesture toward the difference in perspective from the Lutheran position as it relates to the treatment of the church fathers. Chemnitz has quite a lengthy discourse, in reply, on the various meanings of tradition. Second, we will look at justification, which Trent addressed in its first period, session 6. While the *CA* did not assemble much patristic support for this doctrine, there is a telling distinction between Trent and Chemnitz here. Third, we will examine the Eucharist, which Trent took up at numerous times: in its first period, session 7; in its second period, sessions 13 and 14; and in its third period, sessions
21-22. With the Eucharist there is some transition from the CA exchange, transition which led to a solidification of views for each the Catholics and the Lutherans.

The first doctrinal decrees and canons at Trent addressed Scripture and tradition. This was by no means an easily settled matter for the fathers of the Council. An examination of both the debates at the Council of Trent regarding Scripture and tradition and the decree which proceeded from the fourth session of the Council reveal an interesting difference: some conciliar fathers attending Trent used the church fathers in the debates concerning the relationship between Scripture and tradition to mark a clear distinction between the two, while the decree Trent finally issued on the matter leaves the relationship unspecified. Nevertheless, Trent allowed for the protection of the authority of the institutional church, especially the papacy, in defending and interpreting this decree.87

The debates from early February 1546 until the very eve of the decrees’ publication in early April of the same year were lively.88 The first draft of the decree of March 21 read that the saving truth and instruction of the Gospel “were contained partly in the written books and partly in the unwritten traditions.”89 Indeed, this phraseology,

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86 The Eucharist was taken up so often because there are many aspects to eucharistic theology and practice: from the theology of the Sacraments in general to Transubstantiation to the practices following from the doctrine of concomitance.
87 Both Robert Birely and John W. O’Malley explain how there were three claimants to the interpretation and implementation of the Council of Trent: the pope, the bishops, and the “Catholic” princes. Even though the Council itself made no decree concerning papal power, the fact that Pope Pius IV approved and promulgated the entire set of decrees helped to secure the position of the papacy as the key interpreter and implementer from the sixteenth century onward. See Robert Bireley, The Refashioning of Catholicism: 1450-1700 (Washington, D.C.: CUA Press, 1999), 57-66 and John W. O’Malley, “The Council of Trent: Myths, Misunderstandings, and Misinformation,” in Spirit, Style, Story: Essays Honoring John W. Padberg, S.J., ed. Thomas M. Lucas (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002), 221-23.
88 See Angelo Massarelli and Gabriele Paleotti, Acta genuina ss. oecumenici Concilii tridentini (Croatiae: Zagrabiae, 1874), 49-89.
89 Massarelli, Concilii tridentini, 66 (translation mine).
“partly … partly”, was a serious point of contention at the Council and was not altered until just before the final publication. The alteration changed the phrasing to “both … and” so that the decree read that the saving truth and instruction were “contained both in the written books and in the unwritten traditions.”

Leading up to the initial formulation was an examination of the kinds of traditions in the life of the church, which was informed by a study of some church fathers.

The decree, however, is not specific regarding the church fathers themselves. It only states:

[The Synod] clearly perceiving that this [saving] truth and instruction [in morals] are contained in the written books and in the unwritten traditions, which have been received by the apostles from the mouth of Christ Himself, or from the apostles themselves, at the dictation of the Holy Spirit, have come down even to us, transmitted as it were from hand to hand, [the Synod] following the examples of the orthodox Fathers, receives and holds in veneration with an equal affection of piety and reverence all the books both of the Old and of the New Testament, since one God is the author or (sic) both, and also the traditions themselves, those that appertain both to faith and to morals, as having been dictated either by Christ’s own word of mouth, or by the Holy Spirit, and preserved in the Catholic Church by a continuous succession.

While endeavoring for authority, this decree of Trent effectuated ambiguity. What are the “written books” and the “unwritten traditions?” Are they the writings of Scripture and (apostolic) practices like the Eucharist or baptism? If so – and if then these are simply described anew in the later and parallel references to the “Old and New

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90 Massarelli, Concilii tridentini, 87.
91 Massarelli, Concilii tridentini, 56-58.
92 “The Sacred Books and the Traditions of the Apostles are Accepted,” in Sources of Catholic Dogma, ed. Henry Denzinger, trans. Roy J. Defarrari (Fitzwilliam, NH: Loreto, 2007), 244.
93 Ralph Keen offers the following insights as to the implications of this regarding the fathers when he writes, “Neither the historical record nor the dogmatic exposition is normative, and hence the Fathers are not granted authoritative status by the Tridentine decree. But the unwritten tradition affirmed at Trent makes the written tradition necessary, so that the conciliar definition of the relation of Scripture and tradition implies a strong but undefined relationship between the unwritten and the written traditions” (“The Fathers in Counter-Reformation Theology,” 736).
Testament” and the (apostolic) “traditions themselves” – what is their relation to the church fathers? It seems that, for Trent, the church fathers serve as models of and for the Church. They were the ones who received in equivalent fashion both the Scriptures and the traditions, since saving truth and instruction in morals were contained in both. Thus, while the decree leaves the relationship between Scripture and traditions undifferentiated, it does afford the church fathers the position of authority as honored, beneficial, and imitable examples. And this is how Trent used the fathers, as examples for the Church, especially directed at the Church hierarchy, on how to receive both the Scriptures and traditions *authoritatively*.

Martin Chemnitz was the greatest patristics scholar of any of the Lutheran Reformers. His academic life was inspired by the early church, and so his *Examination* takes issue with Trent on most every point by incorporating a study of the fathers. The commonality between Chemnitz and Trent is that both placed the fathers as an ancillary authority to Scripture and as witnesses and expositors of it. The difference is that Chemnitz, while acknowledging the historical circumstances of the Bible’s construction, in typical Lutheran fashion does not give the hierarchical expression of the church the robust intermediary role Trent does. Indeed, Chemnitz finds that the fathers are great witnesses themselves to the centrality of the Bible in all matters of faith. And this is just how Chemnitz uses them. As J.A.O. Preus writes about Chemnitz’s view of the importance of the fathers, “they are our best teachers in emphasizing that ‘The Word of God alone shall establish articles of faith, and no one else, not even an angel.’”

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94 J.A.O. Preus, “The Use of the Church Fathers in the Formula of Concord,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 48 (April-July 1984): 97-112, at 104. The quoted phrase is from Luther’s *Smalcald Articles* II 2.15. Preus himself offers reasons why the Lutherans of the Reformation would have made use of the
In direct reaction to the fourth session of Trent, on the canonical scriptures, Chemnitz elucidates an expansive array of eight meanings of the term ‘tradition’, wherein he argues that Trent is not clear which meaning of tradition it is using at many points. The eight meanings are: 1) “the things which Christ and the apostles delivered by word of mouth and which were later committed to writing by the evangelists and apostles”; 2) the transmission of the written Scriptures; 3) apostolic traditions, i.e., the creeds; 4) the exposition or meaning of Scripture; 5) dogmas which arise from Scripture and reasoning, e.g., infant baptism; 6) the catholic consensus of the fathers; 7) ancient rites and customs traced to apostles and are not contrary to Scripture; and 8) the tradition of faith and morals according to the papists. The eighth, of course, is rejected by Chemnitz, as Frank Senn writes, “not because traditions that ‘cannot be proved with any testimony of Scripture’ were to be rejected out of hand. That would be a biblicistic stance that was incompatible with the Lutheran approach. But what was rejected was the Council of Trent’s teaching that such traditions were as normative for faith and practice as scripture.”

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fathers: 1) to remain in the tradition of the ancient pure church, 2) to show unbroken tradition of teaching, 3) to identify with the ancient pure church and its interpretation of Scripture, 4) to establish authority for their own teaching, 5) to refute errors, 6) to distinguish between Scripture and the writings of men, and 7) to help in establishing a normative interpretation for certain key doctrines and passages (106-7).

95 Examination vol. 1, 223-307. Chemnitz actually employs the term “kind” in order to delineate these variations on tradition, however I will use other words such as “meaning” to do the same so as not to raise confusion about any hard and fast taxonomy.

96 Frank C. Senn, Christian Liturgy: Catholic and Evangelical (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 392. Senn goes on to explain, “Chemnitz already understood scripture as a form of tradition. Scripture is the written apostolic tradition that the church canonized as Sacred Scripture. But by this action of canonization the church gave scripture an authority as a ‘norming norm. … Traditions in the church, whether they are dogmas, ethical teachings, liturgical rites, or sacramental practices, are scriptural not if they can be found in the Bible but if they are consistent with or in harmony with scripture. Chemnitz helped to secure a more viable role for tradition in the Lutheran churches. Tradition in the form of patristic teaching, conciliar decision, and liturgical practice has a place of reverence in the life of the church. But it is a critical reverence, subject to reevaluation in the light of scripture as the final ‘rule and norm’ by which faith and practices are judged” (Senn, Christian Liturgy, 392).
This eighth meaning of tradition is laid in sharp relief to that of the sixth, the catholic consensus of the fathers. In explaining the sixth meaning of tradition, Chemnitz writes:

For we assign to the writings of the fathers their proper and, indeed, honorable place which is due them, because they have clearly expounded many passages of Scripture, have defended the ancient dogmas of the church against new corruptions of heretics, and have done so on the basis of Scripture, have correctly explained many points of doctrine, have recorded many things concerning the history of the primitive church, and have usefully called attention to many other things.  

It is important to observe how Chemnitz incorporates the earlier five meanings of tradition into his explanation of the sixth. The catholic consensus of the fathers is just this, that where they are in concert with the catholic faith as it is formulated on the basis of Scripture they are a legitimate and beneficial expression of tradition. Furthermore, it is of interest for our study to note that in the initial descriptions of the second through seventh meanings of tradition, Chemnitz makes use of the fathers.

So, on the issue of Scripture and tradition, we have examined how Trent uses the fathers as models for the Church (especially the hierarchy) as to how both Scriptures and

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97 *Examination* vol. 1, 256.
98 Chemnitz writes: “The second kind of traditions [sic] is this, that the books of Holy Scripture were, as Augustine says, cared for in an unbroken span of time and by a sure unbroken succession and faithfully transmitted to posterity and to us, as it were, from hand to hand” (*Examination*, 227). “We set down as the third kind of traditions [sic] that concerning which Irenaeus, in Bk. 3 [of *his Adversus Haereses*], and Tertullian, in *De praescriptione adversus haereticos*, speak. Both bestow high praise on the apostolic tradition” (231). “The fourth kind of traditions [sic] is concerning the exposition, the true sense, of natural meaning of the Scripture. It is certain from Irenaeus and from Tertullian that their dispute with the heretics was not only concerning the Scripture but also concerning the exposition, or meaning, of the Scripture” (244). “We shall make this the fifth kind of traditions [sic], that the fathers sometimes call those dogmas traditions which are not set forth in so many letters and syllables in Scripture but which are brought together from clear testimonies of Scripture by way of good, certain, firm, and clear reasoning” (249). “As the sixth kind of traditions [sic] we set down what is said of the catholic consensus of the fathers. For it is a common form of speech to say: ‘The fathers handed it down this way’” (256). “The seventh kind of traditions [sic] is that where the ancients make mention of the unwritten traditions, they do not actually understand dogmas of faith without, besides, and beyond Scripture which are to be accepted even though they cannot be proved by any testimony of Scripture, but they speak of certain ancient rites and customs which they trace back to the apostles because of their antiquity” (267).
traditions are accepted and passed on with authority. We have also examined how Chemnitz uses the fathers as witnesses to the centrality of the Bible in all matters of the faith.

These nuanced views of the importance of the fathers according to Trent and Chemnitz are further uncovered in the discussion on justification. Trent begins its exposition of justification by claiming it “purpose[s] to expound to all the faithful of Christ the true and salutary doctrine of justification, which … Jesus Christ … taught, the apostles transmitted and the Catholic Church, under the instigation of the Holy Spirit, has always retained.”

So, when Trent cites the fathers, it does so with the understanding that they represent part of the tradition derived from the Apostolic transmission, which the Catholic Church has always retained. As such, Trent is using the fathers as authoritative representatives who have been involved in handing down the tradition of the Church which began with the Apostolic transmission and continues into the sixteenth century.

In tracing the various causes of justification (from final, to efficient, to meritorious, etc.), Trent cites Ambrose to explain the instrumental cause and Augustine to explain the unique formal cause. The instrumental cause is baptism, which Ambrose calls the “sacrament of faith” in his De Spiritu Sancto 1.3.42. The unique formal cause is the “justice of God, not that by which He Himself is just, but by which He makes us just” as Augustine writes in his De Trinitate 14.12.15. Likewise, when the Christian is in need of penance for recovery from sin, Trent makes an oblique reference to “the holy Fathers” and the image of penance as a second plank from a ship that has been sundered (the first

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plank being baptism). It is the plank to which the Christian clings; it represents truly the whole ship though the ship itself is lost. As chapter 14 of the “Decree on Justification” from Trent states, “For this manner of justification is the reparation of one fallen, which the holy Fathers have aptly called a second plank after the shipwreck of lost grace.”

Here Trent is referring to the image used by Jerome in his Epistle 130.9 (To Demetrius) and his Commentary on Isaiah 2.3.56. The role of the Catholic Church itself is critical in this scheme, for it is through the Church that the justified are so and in which forgiveness is found by means of penance. In this way, justification is inseparable from the Church for Trent, inseparable from the tradition.

Chemnitz divides his response to the Tridentine decrees into two sections; the first is a direct point-by-point reply, the second is a display of “The Testimonies of the Ancients Concerning Justification.” Here is a characteristic perspective of Chemnitz on the authority of the fathers. While the fathers are diverse in their understandings of justification – indeed, they do not use the word itself (unless it is understood as a synonym for ‘righteousness’) – they serve as expositors of Scripture on the basic issue of justification. In doing so, Chemnitz views “the tribunal of God” as the authority to which the fathers are responsible. Thus, Chemnitz uses the fathers not as representatives of the church faithfully handing down the proper teaching on justification, but rather as those faithfully pointing to Scripture on the matter and faithfully expositing it. The church itself is not the primary means of justification for Chemnitz; the Word of God is.

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100 Denzinger §807, “Decree on Justification,” Sources of Catholic Dogma, 255-56. As we shall see in a later chapter, this is a favorite citation of Luther himself from Jerome, one he used in his Large Catechism when addressing baptism.

101 These are the citations given in a footnote to chapter 14 of Trent on justification.

102 Examination vol. 1, 505.
The church is a surrogate for the Word, the embodied means used by the Word to effect justification for believers. While this view might not be contradictory to the Council of Trent, it can at least be an alternative.

As an expression of this means, the Mass is our last example for this section. 

Trent again makes use of the fathers to argue for a certain understanding of ‘sacrifice’ (that the priest offers Christ to the Father at each Eucharist), and that the Eucharist should be received by the laity under only one kind (the laity should have only the bread). With both of these stances, Trent made the tradition of teaching (about sacrifice) and practice (of only one kind) the purview of the Church, adjudged only by the Church. Here Trent uses the fathers as those who have mediated proper sacramental teaching and practice and so use them to defend that very teaching and practice. The Roman argument for the sacrifice of the Eucharist begins with the relationship between the priesthood and the Mass. Trent claims that the priesthood is necessary for the sacrifice of the Mass: “Since, therefore, in the New Testament the Catholic Church has received from the institution of the Lord the holy, visible sacrifice of the Eucharist, it must also be confessed that there is in this Church a new visible and external priesthood [can. 1], into which the old has been translated [Heb. 7:12].”

Moreover, Trent proclaims the superiority of the Eucharist over the other sacraments due to one factor:

This, indeed, the most Holy Eucharist has in common with the other sacraments, that it is a “symbol of a sacred thing and a visible form of an invisible grace”; but this excellent and peculiar thing is found in it, that the other sacraments first have the power of sanctifying, when one uses them, but in the Eucharist there is the Author of sanctity Himself before it is used [can. 4].

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103 Denzinger §957, “Decree on the Sacrament of Orders,” Sources of Catholic Dogma, 293.
The quoted phrase is a reference to Augustine’s *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum* 3.84.

As for reception of the Eucharist under both species, Trent claims that there ought to be no obligation toward salvation for lay people and non-officiating clerics to receive both kinds. The Council does not recognize any interpretations of Scripture concerning the Last Supper that would mandate communion under both species, nor does it hold that this as a proper interpretation of John 6, “whatever the understanding may be according to the various interpretations of the holy Fathers and Doctors.”\(^{105}\) Additionally, Trent references the fathers in arguing that children are not bound to receive the Eucharist at all. It claims: “Nor is antiquity … to be condemned, if at one time it observed this custom in some places. For, just as those most holy Fathers had good reason for an observance of that period, so certainly it is to be believed without controversy that they did this under no necessity for salvation.”\(^{106}\)

In the case of Chemnitz, however, the fathers are mustered as witnesses to a Lutheran teaching on sacrifice and practice of communion in two kinds.\(^{107}\) For Chemnitz, the teaching and practice are held up to the light of Scripture and not the adjudications of the church itself. Here Chemnitz uses the fathers not as mediators of proper teaching and practice, as did Trent, rather as examples of upholding proper sacramental teaching and practice precisely because they corresponded with Scripture on these issues. On sacrifice, then, Chemnitz would agree to use that term for the Eucharist if it was clear that it indicated the benefits of the sacrifice for the believer. Chemnitz’s

\(^{105}\) Denzinger §930, “The Doctrine on Communion under both Species and that of Little Children,” *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, 286.

\(^{106}\) Denzinger §933, “The Doctrine on Communion under both Species and that of Little Children,” *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, 287.

\(^{107}\) Chemnitz, *Examination* vol. 2, 439-548 on sacrifice and 335-435 on both kinds.
distinction is that the sacrificial benefits of the Eucharist are available because Christ himself is available, not because of anything the priest has done. The Reformer’s concern was that the patristic understanding of sacrifice, as he viewed it, i.e., demonstrating the benefits of Christ for the believer, became obscured in the medieval era and led to the position that the priest is the one offering the sacrifice.\[108\] The abuse of the Mass, for Chemnitz, came when the priest partook in theatrics to the point of detracting from Christ and diverting undue attention to himself. This was not the case in the early church, and Chemnitz cites Augustine’s definition of a sacrifice – “a work which we offer, render, and dedicate to God in order that we may dwell in Him in holy fellowship” – as an example.\[109\] In contrast to the term ‘sacrifice’ for the Eucharist, Chemnitz champions the term sacrament, since “a sacrament … is a holy sign through which God freely offers, conveys, applies, and seals His gratuitous benefits to us.”\[110\]

Concerning receiving the Eucharist under both kinds, Chemnitz makes a concerted effort to defend his position by amassing “testimonies of antiquity.”\[111\] In so doing, he stresses the point that the evidence of ancient communion under both kinds needs to be coupled with the reasons given by the fathers for such. Chemnitz adduces seven reasons. First, the fathers not only distributed both kinds to the whole church but also taught that this should be the case. Second, when any deviance from the simple practice of distributing bread and wine was introduced, the fathers would resort to the

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\[108\] Chemnitz, Examination, vol. 2, 483-93, Article VIII “In What Sense the Ancients Called the Liturgy a Sacrifice.”
\[109\] Chemnitz, Examination, vol. 2, 498. The references are to Contra adversarium legis et prophetarum, Book 1 and De civitate Dei, Book 10.
\[110\] Chemnitz, Examination, vol. 2, 498.

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plain meaning of the scriptural text. Third, Christ himself added the words “do this” to each the bread and wine when he gave instructions at the Last Supper. Fourth, communing with the cup held special benefits and power. Fifth, communing under both kinds fulfills the injunction of Paul that as often as the faithful so commune they are proclaiming Christ’s death until his return. Sixth, just as there are two aspects to human beings, namely body and soul, so the bread and the wine are beneficial to each. Seventh, Old Testament figural representations such as “manna, water from the rock, and the Passover lamb and its blood are fulfilled in the New Testament in this, that generally the sacramental bread is placed before the whole people of Christ to be eaten, and the cup of the Lord to be drunk.” For each of these points, Chemnitz produces numerous citations from the fathers, ranging from Ignatius of Antioch to Augustine, including Jerome, Chrysostom, Cyprian, and Ambrose.

In this section we have explored how the use of the fathers is somewhat alike yet characteristically and importantly distinct for Lutherans and Catholics. The similarity expressed by Trent and Chemnitz is that the fathers are not in any way the normative source for any teaching or practice; instead they are witnesses to the veracity of such teaching or practice. The basis for their veracity is, for Trent, the authority of the unwritten and written traditions that reside in the Roman Church. In this way, Trent used the fathers as models and examples of the responsibility and authority that the Church – in particular, the hierarchy – has for handing on and mediating proper teaching and practice. For Chemnitz, the Lutheran view holds that the basis is Scripture itself, albeit variously interpreted throughout time. Chemnitz used the fathers not as ones who

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mediate both Scripture and tradition on proper teaching and practice, but as ones, we might say, who *adjoin* Scripture and tradition, holding up Scripture especially as the fundamental basis for proper teaching and practice. The next section will give us a set of examples of how the differences between these two sides became polemical and without mutual engagement.

*The Magdeburg Centuries (1559-1574) and the Annales Ecclesiastici (1588-1607)*

This last section is an exploration of two writing projects undertaken in the sixteenth century. These two historical writing projects are treated here because they are important examples for us to consider when studying the use of the church fathers in ‘ecumenical’ relationships and conversations. It can hardly be said that these two writings are ecumenical in the sense that we have meant the word since the beginning of the Ecumenical Movement. It is blatantly the case that here we have two polemical works scripted, each with every intention of undoing the other side and bolstering its own. In the case of the *CA*, its *Confutatio*, and its *Apology* we have parties attempting to salvage something from the damage of the Reformation splintering. Even in the case of Trent and Chemnitz’s *Examination* we have two parties who, while not in conversation with one another directly, are using the church fathers in ways that engage one another. However, with the *Centuries* and the *Annals*, there is simple entrenchment. It is this entrenchment that survived for so long, into the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and was not begun to be undone until the advent of the Ecumenical Movement and great events like Vatican II. Our exploration here will simply be to demonstrate how the church fathers are characterized and made use of in both of these works so that we can
take note of how much is overcome in later ecumenical work. Both the *Centuries* and the *Annals* use the fathers as proof in order to undergird their respective historical projects: one based on the primacy of true doctrine (the *Centuries*) or one based on the primacy of the papacy (the *Annals*).

The Historical Situation

The *Magdeburg Centuries* was the first real foray of the Reformers into historical justification of their positions and caused a good deal of reaction from Catholics. The project was overseen and largely inspired by the Croatian Lutheran Matthias Flacius, a student of Martin Luther who took the latter’s critique of the Roman Church and its history to an extreme level by instigating this rewriting of ecclesiastical history precisely, as Michael Camilli says, in order to “prove from history that the developments of the church guided by the papacy was a departure from early Christianity; and … that Lutheranism was not an innovation but only the restoration of early Christianity.” In this way Flacius thought he was defending the greatness of Martin Luther’s impact on the life of the church, though his approach was at least partially representative of a second-generation group that rivaled Philip Melanchthon and his followers.

The most robust response to the *Centuries* was from the Italian Catholic Cesare Baronius and his *Annales Ecclesiastici*. Baronius was very involved in the life of the Church in Rome. He was made Cardinal in 1596 and Librarian of the Vatican in 1597.

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113 This was not only the case with Cesare Baronius and his *Annales Ecclesiastici*. An early, though ill-suited attempt at responding to the *Centuries* was written by Nicholas Harpsfield in 1566 entitled *Six Dialogues*. See E. Michael Camilli, “Six Dialogues, 1566: Initial Response to the Magdeburg Centuries,” *Archive for Reformation History* 86 (1995):141-52.

114 Camilli, “Six Dialogues,” 144.
The *Annals* was a meticulous defense of the Roman Catholic Church against the attack of the *Centuries* – with a main emphasis on the papacy. The *Annals* did not refute the particular points of the *Centuries* in an orderly fashion but rather attempted to ward off the general perception of ecclesiastical history offered by the *Centuries*. The *Annals* was effectively the life work of Baronius, and progress in writing did not survive his death.

I should stress that the historical veracity of both the *Centuries* and the *Annals* was not critiqued first in the twentieth century by ecumenists. Indeed, these texts were known throughout the intervening years from the sixteenth century on, and were largely dissected by the end of the Enlightenment as poor and fallacious examples of how to do history.\(^{115}\) However, as D. H. Williams writes, “permanent historical ‘damage’ had been done: the reactionary basis of many reform movements was built upon an image of post-Constantinian Christianity that had been partly or largely informed by a distorted view of the fourth century and beyond.”\(^{116}\) For many of the Reformers, there was a line distinguishing the legitimate faith of the early church from the fraudulent order of human authority that arose after the emergence of the Ecumenical Councils. And while there were real abuses by those in power in the church during the medieval ages that undeniably needed reform, such an image greatly heightened the possibility of polemic for both sides.\(^{117}\)

\(^{115}\) Be that as it may, a new study by Irena Backus provides a fresh view of these texts and these traditional assessments. In her *Historical Method and Confessional Identity in the Era of the Reformation (1378-1615)* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), she argues for a more generous understanding of these works. They were revolutionary, if polemical, ways of doing history that actually complement one another in certain aspects and deserve renewed consideration.

\(^{116}\) D.H. Williams, *Retrieving the Tradition and Renewing Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 111.

\(^{117}\) Again, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Smith’s *Drudgery Divine* chronicles some of the key examples of how this view is transmitted from the sixteenth century until into the twentieth (if not beyond, for some). For instance, Smith explains how some have held that it is not only that the corruption
Examination of the *Centuries* and the *Annals*

There are a number of elements of the *Centuries* and the *Annals* that are comparable and contrastable. First among them is the *Centuries*’ delineation of the foundation of the church’s life as doctrine. In particular it is doctrine first and foremost understood as the Word of God. For the *Annals*, the foundation of the church and its truth is the papal office, initially bestowed by divine expression through Jesus to Peter. So from the very outset we have two competing views of the seminal factor in the life of the church. For the *Centuries* it is the didactic expression of the Word of God which needs to be kept inviolable and secure, for the *Annals* it is the central didactic and structural expression of the church’s life in the office of the pope which needs to retain its authority through time.

Following from these central concerns of the two works come distinctive views. For the *Centuries* the church fathers are important because the true doctrine of the Word of God is most effectively revealed to and bestowed upon the church in Jesus Christ himself. While Scripture is a centrally important element of the faith, it is only so because of the chronology the *Centuries* espouse. The purest era of the church’s life is the first century when the Word become flesh, lived among humanity, and was retained of the pure and original faith came about because of the Councils and the establishment of a fixed hierarchy, but that it came from an unholy borrowing of pagan ‘mystery religions’ in order to create such an establishment. Smith articulates what such a view might contend, “One can formulate the principle of comparison that has informed the majority of scholarship in this area as follows: ‘Apostolic Christianity’ and ‘Protestantism’ are ‘unique’; the religions of Late Antiquity, most especially the ‘misteries’ and ‘Catholicism’, are the ‘same’” (*Drudgery Divine*, 45).

and remembered in a meaningful fashion through the Scriptures. The *Centuries* here cite Irenaeus’ *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* 2.46 in order to uphold the position that it is the presence of Christ himself that is essential to the truth of doctrine.\footnote{\textit{Centuries} II c.iv. I am here using the 1559-1574 Basileae per Ioannem Oporinum edition of the \textit{Ecclesiastica historiam}. The Centuriators only had Eusebius’ references to this work of Irenaeus. However, an Arminian copy of the \textit{Demonstration} was discovered in 1904 and allows for a sense of context for the citation given in the \textit{Centuries}.} Irenaeus here argues that Christ himself spoke to Moses out of the burning bush, thus signaling the beginning of a number of experiences of deliverance that culminated with the crucifixion and humanity’s deliverance from sin. The *Centuries* are using this quotation from Irenaeus to claim that only those claims that are in line with such understandings of Jesus are accounted as right doctrine. So, as mentioned above, the *Centuries* use the fathers as proof undergirding their historical project which makes doctrine the criterion for the faith, doctrine as it is taught in Scripture and \textit{not} as it is mediated and overseen by the pope.

For the *Annals*, the early church is important on a broader scale because it is the era wherein the papacy was instituted and from which it extends through time unblemished in the apostolic succession of Peter’s authoritative heirs. Indeed, it is no small matter that the *Annals*’ method of yearly sections heads each page by noting three years of reign in a specific order: first, that of Christ; second, that of the Pope; and third, that of the emperor. Since the reign is Christ’s, and he is not bodily on the earth as he had been before his ascension, there needs to be one who stands in his stead; this is the bishop of Rome, who is in succession to Peter, the one on whom Christ himself bestowed authority. The *Annals* refer to Jerome’s *Adversus Iovinianum* to explain the view that the
ultimate earthly authority for the church is found in Peter and his successors. Here the Annals use the fathers as proof undergirding their historical project which makes the position and authority of the pope, along with obedience to the pope, as the criterion for the faith.

For each of these positions, there is some central aspect of the church’s life that is found at the very beginning of the church’s life and history: for the Centuries it is doctrine, for the Annals it is the papacy. On each view, the central aspect will remain pure from the outset. The defense of either position rests on proving through historical means that evidence of either central aspect has shown itself over and against the other. The first century provides for the Centuries the purest time of church teaching because it is the era most proximate to Jesus himself. Thus the apostolic teachings and writings which express this teaching are permanent. Moreover, it is by contrast with this first century that all other centuries are to be properly judged for their adherence to pure doctrine. The first century is not necessarily more important than another for the Annals, except insofar as this is when the papacy was instituted. The expressions of oversight and power for the papacy are timeless as the Annals present them.

Here we have a key distinction between the Centuries and the Annals. For the Centuries, the test of ecclesial authenticity comes from the purity of the teaching of the church. This does not mean that the ancient faith is per force truer than a later expression. What it does mean, however, is that the ‘original’ faith of the church, the original teaching (i.e., the Word of God, Jesus) is the material element of purity. On this

\[120\] Annals 34, col. 198. I am here using the version of the Annales published by the Congregation of the Oratory of Mary in Valicella at Rome between 1594 and 1607.
view, the originality of the church to be recovered and defended is not the ancient life of the church, either in its ecclesial make-up or structure or in its habits and practices, but its teaching, its doctrine.¹²¹ Patristic evidence adduced in support of this position includes Ignatius of Antioch (cited from Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History* 3.22) and Clement of Alexandria.¹²² The former simply relates that Ignatius was the second bishop of Antioch and does not tell the reader anything about his theology. Perhaps the *Centuries* should have also cited 3.36, which at least explains the context for all his letters, in which his theology is presented. The latter is a reference to Clement’s *Stromata* 1.12 wherein he argues that not all mysteries of the faith are to be revealed. Apparently, the *Centuries* intend this to argue against the primacy of Rome by claiming that desiring such an earthly central authority is detrimental to the faith because it would tend to an over-explanation and over-elucidation of the mysteries.

For the *Annals*, the test of ecclesial authenticity comes in the form of papal authority and its adherence to the authority found in Peter. While the *Annals* has a good deal of historical gymnastics to perform in always supporting the central authority of the papacy in all major arenas of the church’s life, it is here that the purity of the faith

¹²¹ In explaining the method of the Centuriators, Irena Backus states: “Their general preface is devoted to justifying the production of yet another history of the Church and to explaining the specificity of their method. Indeed, their idea of ordering doctrine in a set number of commonplaces for each period of a hundred years was quite revolutionary at the time and required justification. It meant among other things that the Church could be freely redefined and that for the first time ever history of the Church was equated not with the history of an institution within the framework of God’s plan but with history of Christian thought and teaching. … Moreover, still in the Centuriators’ view, some very reputable historians had a good understanding of past events but a very poor understanding of doctrine” (*Historical Method and Confessional Identity*, 361).

¹²² The first is cited in I/II c.vii, which is a chapter on the politics of the church among the people of Judea. The second is cited in I/II c.x, a chapter which spends a good deal of time against the primacy of Rome.
Thus the papacy serves as the prism through which the entire life of the church is to be viewed for authenticity and verification. Thus, on the view of the *Annals*, a return to the early church would mean a return to the instigation of the ecclesial form that Christ himself pronounced, not necessarily the forms of life of the first centuries themselves. To this end, the *Annals* reference a number of church fathers when discussing the very scene from the Gospels where Christ speaks of Peter, on Baronius’ view, as the one upon whom the church will be built. The list includes (in order of appearance) Augustine, Tertullian, Cyril, Chrysostom, and Ambrose. However, it is Cyprian who receives the greatest attention. His Epistles 55 and 59, to Cornelius and Florentius Pupianus, respectively, are cited as evidence that Peter’s confession of faith confirms his appropriateness for being the foundation of the church. In these two letters, Cyprian is writing to those who are under persecution and in danger of martyrdom. As a way to embolden and comfort his audience, the Carthaginian father reminds them of the words of Peter, who confesses that there is no other to whom the church may go except Christ, a reference to Matthew 15:13. Baronius is here profiting from Cyprian’s emphasis on the authority of Peter; when Peter makes this confession, it is for all people and in the voice of the church. The *Annals*’ point is that since this greatest of confessions is given by one who speaks for the whole church and upon the authority of Christ himself, this very authority extends through his successors in Rome.

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123 On this, Norelli provides a very enlightening exposé on how the two histories treated the Council of Nicaea. On the issue of the papacy, he describes how the *Annals* works adamantly to argue that while Constantine may have convoked the council, Pope Sylvester was implicitly involved. See Norelli, “The Authority Attributed to the Early Church,” 763.
124 *Annals*, Year 33, 137-9.
Thus in summary, as Norelli states:

So, in the *Centuries of Magdeburg*, as in the *Annals* of Baronius, the Early Church does not seem to have any particular theological authority of its own. In the work of the Centuriators, it is located at the end of the Apostolic period, and shares with the successive centuries (albeit to a lesser extent) the destiny of doctrinal decadence; in the *Annals*, it is the faithful witness to Christian faith, and its members distinguish themselves by a sanctity of doctrine and life not renewed in such a rich form anymore. Their descendents are for ever subject to Peter’s episcopal throne and it is only by their agreement with the later that their authority is measured.126

These two contrasting views of the early church set a trajectory that influenced both sides for generations to come. To cite D. H. Williams again, the damage had been done.127

For these Reformers, yielding authority to the established institutional church was unhinged from its ecclesial moorings so that authority was now sought to be anchored elsewhere, coming to shore in an evangelical interpretation of Scripture that portrays the pure doctrine from the first century. And for the Catholics, the papacy became the defining center and expression of the church’s authority.

Because of the loss of Roman ecclesial authority in the sixteenth century, Lutherans strove to recover such authority for doctrinal positions through a surrogate. In the case of the *Centuries* this surrogate authority comes in the form of the perceived church of the first century and its doctrines, to which all other expressions of the church are to be compared. And while this is an easily enough debunked view of history *per se*, it remains an important phenomenon for us to be aware of, mainly because it provides an example of the kind of view of purity in the church that persists in various guises

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126 Norelli, “The Authority Attributed to the Early Church,” 760. This point, however, is not uncontested. Backus demonstrates that the Centuriators were more interested in the proper thread of history than its truncation. She does this by exploring the use of Gregory of Nazianzus and Basil of Caesarea, both of whom date to the middle and late fourth century.

The importance of the *Annals* as a historical project resides in its legacy of treating the institution of the papacy as the foundational expression of and authority for the life and teaching of the church. In this way, the *Annals* contributed mightily to the perception of the need for the papacy to be solidified and shored up in its base of power and in its degree of involvement in the church’s life. In both cases, of the *Centuries* and the *Annals*, the viability of these positions is vigorously defended due to particular views of the early church.\(^{129}\)

**Conclusion**

This chapter has given us three episodes from the sixteenth century wherein the church fathers were used by both Lutherans and Catholics. In the first place, we saw an engagement between persons and institutions in the *CA*, its *Confutation*, and *Apology*. Here the beginnings of a shift are noticeable, since the Lutherans started to move the status of the fathers out from under the authority of the church and set them on their own, their merits judged in light of Scripture only. The Catholics too started a shift, but in this case it was a consolidation of the fathers under the authority of the church. Secondly, these positions were to some degree formalized in the Council of Trent and the works of Martin Chemnitz in an exchange that was not mutual, but not entirely polemical. Thirdly, the last section, however, exposed the possibilities of rancor and polemic as the

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\(^{128}\) Here, again, I refer the reader to Smith’s *Drudgery Divine*.

\(^{129}\) To cite Irena Backus once more: “Both the *Centuries* and the *Annals* were fundamentally apologetic in tone but it is more important to note that each represented a well-defined school of history. The Centuriators put the accent on the history of doctrine and on the diversity of geographical locations of the Church depending on the century. Baronius, for his part, instantiated the Annals method as he compiled his year by year, season by season account of the Church of Rome” (*Historical Method and Confessional Identity*, 377).
Centuries and the Annals worked to undo the other’s view of authority, instigating a contemptuous war over the subject of history, whether it is sacred, secular, or to what degree and by what composition both. Along the way, there were more specific uses of the fathers, as for example when the Reformers of the first episode used them as defense against the charge of novelty or when the Catholics of the second episode used them as mediators of the tradition regarding proper sacramental teaching and practice.

This is also the place to reassert the similarities and differences between the first two episodes from the sixteenth century examined in this chapter and the current ecumenical situation regarding the use of the fathers. The first episode from the sixteenth century and the current ecumenical situation are alike in that the Reformers/Lutherans and Catholics are in direct communication with one another, attempting to work out how to live in the one church. They are unlike in that in the sixteenth century Rome still maintained that it had authority over both groups (again, however fleeting that may have been), while in the current situation the Lutherans have their own churches, complete with practices, teachings, and structures. The second episode from the sixteenth century and the current ecumenical situation are alike in that the Reformers/Lutherans and Catholics two distinct ecclesial bodies. They are unlike in that the two sides were not in meaningful conversation with one another: Trent met and promulgated; and Chemnitz replied – but neither of these was done (in the end) with the other party present and in full conversation with them.

It is a main contention of my work that the relationship of twentieth-century ecclesiology with ressourcement has provided a great help for parties just like the Lutherans and Catholics. Communion ecclesiology with its own use of the
fathers has afforded an accessible vision of the church that is not monolithic but instead plastic and polysemic. This vision of the church, which both Lutherans and Catholics see as encompassing but not limited to their own churches, has assisted the Lutherans and Catholics in their ecumenical work. In this way, the current ecumenical situation can capitalize on the benefits of the two ways in which it is similar to two episodes from the sixteenth century while softening the effects of the two ways in which it is different. That is, communion ecclesiology (as formulated through ressourcement) has helped Lutherans and Catholics to be in direct dialogue with one another because they share a common vision of the church, while easing the Roman claim to ecclesial authority.\textsuperscript{130}

As we will see in the next chapters, the work done on communion ecclesiology was not accomplished as a joint venture in theology. Rather it was and is done in various ways by various theologians of various denominations. Notwithstanding the variance, this work retains a commonality, not only because of the subject matter, i.e., the church, but also the ways in which the fathers are used to construct such an ecclesiological vision. Such a focus on the church makes theological space for fresh and creative ways of addressing the partitioned legacy of the Reformation.

\textsuperscript{130} This is, admittedly, a very difficult and complex issue. I do not mean to suggest that the Roman Catholic Church has simply jettisoned its claim to universal authority over Christians in adopting communion ecclesiology. I simply mean to say that it recognizes the ways in which this claim to authority needs to be refashioned in the ecumenical age, not to lessen its claim, but to make it more available to other churches and (what Vatican II calls) 'ecclesial communions'.

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CHAPTER 3

COMMUNION ECCLESIOLOGY AND RESSOURSEMENT, PART 1

THE MULTIPLE BEGINNINGS OF COMMUNION ECCLESIOLOGY

Introduction

As the goal of the Ecumenical Movement is the church’s “full and visible unity,” it should not be surprising that the vision of the church which has the most theological purchase at the moment is known by a cognate of unity, namely communion ecclesiology. Notwithstanding such purchase, or possibly precisely because of it, the meaning and helpfulness of communion ecclesiology has been and is currently in dispute. Therefore, in this and the next chapter I will address a number of related issues surrounding two basic points: first, an exploration of communion ecclesiology, its history and place in ecumenism; and second, the relationship between communion ecclesiology and the ressourcement movement of the 20th century. This relationship between communion ecclesiology and the fathers is critical for my present work because it is here that the exploration of the church fathers’ place in ecumenical conversations becomes a viable and needed subject of research. Indeed, my main contention is that communion ecclesiology is both based in large part on the fathers and provides a framework for ecumenical conversation in which the fathers can be used to help forge ecumenical rapprochement.
It may be somewhat misleading to refer to ressourcement as a movement. It was not so in the same ways that two other movements of the 20th century were: the ecumenical and the liturgical. In each of these two cases, the history, documentation, and participants of the movements are fairly well known and cited. However, with ressourcement this is not so easily done. The ressourcement movement was and is a very loose and decentralized endeavor, begun by a few individual Roman Catholic theologians (such as Yves Congar, Henri de Lubac, and Hans Urs von Balthasar). The very term ressourcement is difficult to translate into English. Ressourcement can mean something like “retrieval of sources” or “return to sources,” yet the purpose for such retrieval and return is a key theological issue. To what end? Why be about this kind of work?

In an attempt to address just these issues there have been some efforts to establish a public forum for the work of ressourcement. Two of the earliest were the Sources Chrétiennes, the series of early church and medieval primary sources that were collected and translated by French Jesuits such as Jean Daniélou and Henri de Lubac, and the series Théologie, under the direction of Henri Bouillard. Both of these projects had an immediate impact on the theological scene as essays by Aidan Nichols and Brian Daley have chronicled. Nichols’ essay tells the story of “the intellectual clash of arms

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between the chief representatives of what would shortly be called *la nouvelle théologie* – Jean Daniélou, Henri de Lubac, and others – and the classical French Dominican Thomism of the *Revue Thomiste*, in the years 1946 to 1948. “

Daley’s work presents a survey of the contentious points between theologians of the *nouvelle théologie* and the Roman Catholic hierarchy, in particular concerning the nature of the Church and theological language, both of which are important to how each side views how to understand the Bible: whether, for the former, in a typological and spiritual manner, or, for the latter, in a manner that discloses dogmatic truths.

Indeed, there was an instantaneous and abrupt response to this *ressourcement* by adherents to a kind of classical French Dominican Thomism as it was produced in the journal *Revue Thomiste*, a periodical edited by Marie-Michel Labourdette who himself did much of the responding. This academic response was soon followed by an official Roman response in the form of Pope Pius XII’s encyclical *Humani Generis* in 1950. Both responses had this much in common: they were concerned that those who were advocating *ressourcement* were doing so to the peril of established doctrine and that they were promoting a mentality that found the earlier writings of the church to have more authority simply because they were earlier. Much of the discussion around these issues has centered on just this basic question; that is, whether earlier writings have any particular authority sheeely due to the fact that they are early.

Nevertheless, the popularity of *ressourcement* has not waned. The movement has been credited with inspiring and being behind a good deal of the work of Vatican II and the subsequent post-conciliar theology coming both from the Vatican and from Catholic

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theology outside Rome as well. In fact, it has branched out and taken on life in many diverse circles. Two examples will suffice here. One was the creation of the periodical *Communio: International Catholic Review* in 1972 and still in existence today. In the first issue of the journal, Hans Urs von Balthasar wrote an introductory article to provide an image of what this retrieval might look like.\(^{134}\) Von Balthasar does not give a detailed method for how the retrieval might be done; instead he offers a vision of what use this work may be. Essentially, this retrieval is necessary, on von Balthasar’s view, for the sake of the ecumenical and catholic church. In order for the church to know how to relate to the world, it needs to recover a sense of its history. So, both kinds of work, the retrieval and the ecumenical, are complementary. A second attempt at a public forum for this *ressourcement* is the more recently published series of books entitled *Ressourcement: Retrieval and Renewal in Catholic Thought*, edited by David Schindler. This series, published by Eerdmans Press, has quite a diverse set of subjects: from Dorothy Day to Henri de Lubac and from Maurice Blondel to Pope Benedict XVI. Yet, the point is to bring these subjects into conversation with one another so that the renewal aspects of *ressourcement* can be accomplished as much as the retrieval aspects.

It is not my purpose here to delve into the history of the *ressourcement* movement or to assess the trends and positions of those involved in the larger discussions. Rather, I wish to highlight the connection between the kind of retrieval and renewal being done in the *ressourcement* movement and the ecumenical work on communion ecclesiology. In particular, with *ressourcement*’s emphasis on theological discussions of the Trinity there

is a strong relationship with the ecumenical movement’s visions of the church in 
communion ecclesiology.

I will lay out four contexts in which versions of communion ecclesiology have 
arisen. The first two are Eastern Orthodoxy and the World Council of Churches, chosen 
because they represent a large portion of Christian churches around the world and have 
taken communion ecclesiology seriously. The second two are Roman Catholicism and 
Lutheranism, chosen because they are the focus of this present work. While it is 
impossible to designate a specific genesis for communion ecclesiology, it is an 
ecumenical obligation to explore how each of these four has impacted and invigorated the 
others. The next chapter will explore four representative theologians, one corresponding 
to each of these contexts: Eastern Orthodoxy, the WCC, Catholicism, and Lutheranism.

The material in this chapter and the next will be helpful for understanding the 
chapters which deal with the U.S. Lutheran/Roman Catholic dialogue. This and the next 
chapter explore how many churches have come to understand and make use of 
communion ecclesiology, both for themselves and in relation to other churches. 
Additionally they use the church fathers in formulating their understandings of 
communion ecclesiology. This helps situate the Lutheran and Catholic churches, in 
particular, within the larger scene. The chapters covering the U.S. Lutheran/Roman 
Catholic ecumenical dialogue examine where and how that dialogue uses the church 
fathers both in connection with communion ecclesiology and not in connection with it. 
As previously mentioned, the L/RC dialogue uses the fathers in two main ways: it uses 
them to construct historical background when the dialogue topic is not directly related to 
ecclesiology, and it uses them in the ecumenical argument of a given round when the
topic is directly related to ecclesiology – in this second case often making use of elements of or a fully focused communion ecclesiology.

The level of analysis in this and the next chapters for showing exactly how the church fathers are used will not be as precise as it was in the chapter on the sixteenth century or in the chapters dealing with the U.S. L/RC dialogue. The reason for this is that the material examined here is simply too broad. The diversity of traditions, churches, and contexts does not allow for the kind of rigorous and in-depth examination that can be accomplished in those other chapters. Nevertheless, I will still employ some of the same terminology to offer observations. That is, as we move through each context (Orthodoxy, the WCC, Catholicism, and Lutheranism) I will examine how the fathers are being used by utilizing terms such as source, precedent, and model for ecclesial practice or way of conceiving a theological issue. In this way, we will examine how the fathers are used, even if we cannot put as tight a seal around the collection of analyses as for the other chapters. The main point here is to demonstrate that even in such a wide range of contexts, various versions of communion ecclesiology have made intentional usage of the fathers that is both characteristic of their churches and traditions as well as attempting to be ecumenically-minded and open.

*Multiple Beginnings of Communion Ecclesiology*

Communion ecclesiology has gained theological traction in many churches and traditions. And it seems that each one could attempt to lay claim to the status of being the first at recapturing this earliest centuries’ vision of the church. For example, the Orthodox theologian Ernest Skublics has lamented:
One could only wish that, in … authoritative expressions of a Roman Catholic 
reception of communion ecclesiology, credit were candidly given where it is due: 
to eastern Orthodoxy, whence this ancient vision of the Church had been 
rediscovered, rather than disingenuously suggesting that it was a discovery of the 
Second Vatican Council.\textsuperscript{135}

Notwithstanding Skublics’ assurances, it is difficult to pin down the real or true 
emergence of the vision of communion ecclesiology. So, in this section I will briefly 
sketch the emergence of communion ecclesiology in four related yet distinct strands: 
Eastern Orthodoxy, the World Council of Churches, Roman Catholicism, and 
Lutheranism.

\textbf{Eastern Orthodoxy}

In a 2005 essay, one seven years later than that just cited above, Skublics has 
traced a history of communion ecclesiology in Eastern Orthodoxy, taking a somewhat 
more measured position regarding Orthodoxy as the rightful provenance of communion 
ecclesiology. Accordingly, Skublics begins this later essay with the sentence, “The 
revival of a eucharistic or communion ecclesiology in both East and West in the twentieth 
century is a development in which theologians of both traditions were intimately involved 
and in fact mutually influential and interconnected.”\textsuperscript{136} The historical survey Skublics 
gives begins with the Slavophiles, like Sergei Bulgakov and Nikolai Berdyaev, and their 
“discovery of organicism,” primarily in philosophy (“an appreciation for the organic


wholeness and relationality of the universe”) and then later in relation to the church.137

Indeed, it was under the influence of Bulgakov and Berdyaev that the lay theologian
Alexi Khomiakov worked with the concepts of sorbonost and obshchina in relation to
ecclesiology. The first of these terms is a well-studied one that comes from the Russian
Orthodox church and its people which Skublics suggests can be translated as either
“conciliarity” or even “ecclesiality.” The second, however, is less-well-known; it comes
from the image for a Russian peasant or village commune and points to the greater
aspects of the church as an organic reality, not just a doctrine or an institution.

However, the organicism of these Slavophiles was lacking a proper grounding in
the life and practices of the church and was in danger of succumbing to the Romantic
view of life from which it hailed. Thus, according to Skublics, the next progression in
this eastern view of communion ecclesiology came from Nikolai Afanasiev who “first
expressed the preliminary outline” of “[a]n ecclesiology that is expressed through the
Holy Eucharist and that reflects the relations of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity.”138
This was accomplished not just as an extension of the organicism of the Slavophiles, but
also as a way to construct a “theological understanding of the mystery of the Church, as
constituted pneumatologically and sacramentally rather than juridically.”139

Skublics moves from Afanasiev’s sacramental ecclesiology to John Zizioulas’
emphasis on the freedom that lies at the foundation of the communion of the church such
that it is both trinitarian and personal. As we will see also in the next chapter, Zizioulas
argues “God is Trinity not because of the divine nature but because the Father as a person

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137 Skublics, “Rebirth,” 121 and 97.
139 Skublics, “Rebirth,” 104.
freely wills this communion.”¹⁴⁰ As such, “the consequences of this Trinitarian principle are foundational for ecclesiology.”¹⁴¹ From here, Skublics expounds on the work of anthropological theologians like Vladimir Lossky and Georgios Mantzaridis, who further “[spell] out the implications of being created in the image and likeness of God.”¹⁴² This last stage has brought the Orthodox exploration of communion ecclesiology almost full-circle, since it brings us back to the relationality of the human being with all of creation, albeit through the life of the church. Thus, it is not simply a general philosophical organismism, as with the Slavophiles, but an inter-relatedness of God with creation, expressed in perfect freedom through the church and of human beings with God and with one another, again expressed in the freedom come from God, given to humans in their very creation.

While Skublics has begun to give us a history of the Orthodox contribution to and formulation of communion ecclesiology, it comes largely through a consideration of the work of individual theologians. What is also needed is a perspective on what this contribution has looked like in the realm of the Ecumenical Movement, i.e., within bilateral and multi-lateral dialogues. Communion ecclesiology from the Orthodox perspective is “an ecclesiology that seeks to overcome the distortions that have emerged due to political and historical contingencies of recent centuries.”¹⁴³ In other words, an Orthodox communion ecclesiology attempts to broaden the scope of what the church is

beyond the typical autocephalous view that is often a narrowly national association (i.e., the Russian Orthodox Church). In being such, this Orthodox version of communion ecclesiology has needed some time to interact with other versions, especially those Protestant and Roman versions of the West. For as Jeff Gros, et al. have pointed out:

While the meeting of Patriarch Athenagoras and Pope Paul VI in Jerusalem in 1964, and their commending of the 1054 anathemas to oblivion (1965) gave a dramatic start to this process of reconciliation after centuries of estrangement, it took fifteen years of a dialogue of charity, and the beginning of an annual exchange of delegates on St. Andrew’s and St. Peter’s feasts before a theological dialogue of truth became possible in 1980.\footnote{Jeffrey Gros, et al., Introduction to Ecumenism (New York: Paulist, 1998), 164 (emphasis in original).}

Indeed, something similar has occurred regarding the involvement of the Orthodox with the World Council of Churches, when there was a time for the Orthodox and the churches of the Reformation to familiarize themselves with one another before engaging on the particularly difficult issues of ecclesial division and the struggle for visible unity.

The 1920 encyclical of Metropolitan Germano Strenopolous of Seleukia entitled “Unto the Churches of Christ Everywhere” was a remarkable and early call for a union of churches. While it did not come from what we now call communion ecclesiology, the Metropolitan’s letter did use some of the language which is familiar to such ecclesiology. As Thomas Fitzgerald notes, at its very base, “[t]he encyclical sent greetings to all the [Churches of Christ everywhere] and invited them to consider seriously the formation of a Fellowship (koinonia) of Churches.”\footnote{Fitzgerald, The Ecumenical Movement, 105.} Additionally, it should be noted, however, that the Metropolitan also used two other images quite strongly: a body (the Body of Christ and the body of the Church) and a household (integrating notions of family and inheritors). In this way, the Orthodox have been advocating for and partaking in the
Ecumenical Movement and been thinking of such ecumenism, at least in part, in terms of communion.

As for Orthodox participation in the WCC, there are two trends to note. First, it appears that many of the reports from WCC assemblies regarding the church are heavily influenced by Orthodox thought on the Trinity and communion ecclesiology. Second, a sampling of Orthodox bi-lateral conversations shows both the presence and absence of communion ecclesiology within the conversations.

Regarding the second trend, we can examine three bi-lateral dialogues: the Anglican/Eastern Orthodox, the Old Catholic/Eastern Orthodox, and the Eastern Orthodox/Roman Catholic. After fourteen years of resumed conversations, the Anglicans and Eastern Orthodox came to the *Moscow Agreement* of 1976. This document covers a number of issues that had been points of disagreement over time between the East and West generally and more recently between these two churches. Chapter VI of the Agreement is entitled “The Church as the Eucharistic Community” and does have an emphasis on *koinonia*. As the *Moscow Agreement* states: “The Church celebrating the Eucharist becomes fully itself; that is *koinonia*, fellowship – communion. The Church celebrates the Eucharist as the central act of its existence, in which the ecclesial community, as a living reality confessing its faith, receives its realization.”

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146 I will go into more detail about the influence of Orthodox thought on the WCC assembly reports below, when I speak to the rise of communion ecclesiology in the WCC itself. For the moment, however, I only note the difference.

147 *Moscow Statement*, 1976, #24; quoted from *Growth in Agreement*, eds. Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer (New York/Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1984), 45 (hereafter *GiA*). However, in the *Agreed Statement* of 1984, while the two churches came to a much fuller discussion and statement of the same kinds of issues found in the *Moscow Agreement*, the discussion on the church yields a paucity of references to communion. The discussion begins with a look at the New Testament, and the dialogue highlights phrases such as “body of Christ,” “messianic gathering,” “temple of God,” and “Christ’s bride” when speaking of the church (*Agreed Statement* of 1984, §4-7). Even the discussion on the marks of the church issuing from Nicaea
The dialogue between the Old Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox churches has two main descriptions of the church: both the body and communion, often with the second being subsumed by the first. The *Agreed Statement* on ecclesiology written at Chambésy in 1977 has three parts, the first focusing on the nature and marks of the church. In this there are various descriptions of the church pulled from tradition, only one of which is close to a definition. The Statement claims, “[I]t is a communion of believers, it is composed of all the true believers of all the ages, it is the human race united in the God-man.” Here the Orthodox dialogue uses the church fathers as sources for understanding the doctrine of the church’s oneness and catholicity. When discussing oneness as a mark of the church from the Nicene Creed, the *Statement* expounds using John Chrysostom’s Homilies on John 78.3 to explain how the unity of the church rests on the unity of will of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. On the church’s catholicity, the *Statement* quotes at some length St. Cyril of Jerusalem in order to describe the church’s geographic reach, universal teaching, subjection of all to

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shows no real emphasis on communion ecclesiology. Indeed, the only real reference to communion is in the context of clarifying the difference between the two churches on “intercommunion.” For Anglicans, “intercommunion” is a reciprocal or limited relationship between churches and can serve as a means to fuller unity; i.e., some kind of more intentional and recognizable communion, “such as full communion or organic union” (*Agreed Statement* of 1984, §19). For the Orthodox, however, the same view regarding a sort of incremental movement toward communion is simply not possible: “[C]ommunion’ involves a mystical and sanctifying unity created by the body and blood of Christ, which makes them ‘one body and one blood with Christ’, and therefore they can have no differences of faith. There can be ‘communion’ only between local churches which have a unity of faith, ministry and sacraments. For this reason the concept of ‘intercommunion’ has no place in Orthodox ecclesiology” (*Agreed Statement* of 1984, §20). This same point is reaffirmed later in the summary of the *Statement’s* discussion on the church. Here we see an expression of the basic difference in approach to ecclesiology between the two churches and between the Orthodox and the WCC (as we shall see below).

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149 Homily 78 of Chrysostom is a homily on John 16:4-6, a passage from the Last Supper discourse wherein Jesus is explaining why he is making these revelations now, i.e., at the time of his departure. See *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Gospel of St. John and the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 1:14, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996 [reprint]), 286-7.
godliness, and healing of sin.\(^{150}\) The same kind of schema is given in the Bonn Statement of 1979, “The Unity of the Church and the Local Churches,” where the body of Christ is the main image of the church and fellowship is subsumed within this image.\(^{151}\) Bonn cites Ignatius’ letter to the Smyrneans 8.1 as a source for understanding the unity of the whole church in the expression of all the local churches and their individual Eucharists. Likewise, it refers to Irenaeus’ *Adversus Haereses* 1.10.1-2 to defend the assertion that the “[u]nity in faith is the supreme principle of the Catholic Church.”\(^{152}\)

Moreover, this same emphasis on the body and subsuming communion and fellowship to it takes place in the 1987 document on *Church Community* from Kavala, which states, “The church is the one body of Christ, animated by the one Holy Spirit. In this body, by the work of the Spirit, the faithful are bound together in the unity of faith, worship and church order.”\(^{153}\) The one body is manifest to the people through the Eucharist, “and all who receive this eucharist become one body, the body of Christ.”\(^{154}\) In this case, the Orthodox dialogue uses the fathers as sources for explaining how the faithful are bound together. Explicit and full passages from Augustine’s Sermon 227 and

\(^{150}\) The Cyril text is his *Mystagogical Catecheses* 18.23, which reads, “It is called Catholic then because it extends over all the world, from one end of the earth to the other; and because it teaches universally and completely one and all the doctrines which ought to come to men’s knowledge, concerning things both visible and invisible, heavenly and earthly; and because it bring into subjection to godliness the whole race of mankind, governors and governed, learned and unlearned; and because it universally treats and heals the whole class of sins, which are committed by soul or body, and possesses in itself every form of virtue which is named, both in deeds and words, and in every kind of spiritual gifts” (*Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory Nazianzen*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 2:7, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974 reprint], 140). These *Catecheses* were Cyril’s greatest patrimony as a patristic author: they were not only theologically sound but were spiritually invigorating and instructive of the liturgical life of the church.

\(^{151}\) *Agreed Statement*, 1979, §1&4. Interestingly, the third part of the *Statement* from Zagorsk in 1981 focuses on the authority of the church and leaves any discussion of its nature and description out of consideration.

\(^{152}\) *Agreed Statement*, §22.


\(^{154}\) *Church Community*, §2.
John Chrysostom’s Homily on 1 Corinthians 24.2 follow to detail what this means.
Likewise, the entire church, paying particular attention to the members (i.e., the laity), is included in this fellowship. Ignatius’ letter to the Ephesians 20.2 is cited to show how all members of the church experience a common grace under the obedience of the bishop.

The last example of how communion ecclesiology plays into the bilateral conversations of the Eastern Orthodox is the Eastern Orthodox/Roman Catholic dialogue. In The Mystery of the Church and of the Eucharist in the Light of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity from Munich in 1982, communion ecclesiology plays a large role, even though the entry into the relationship between the Eucharist and the church is the image of the body of Christ. Yet, it is the motif of communion that fills out the dialogue. As the document states: “The Spirit puts into communion with the body of Christ those who share the same bread and the same cup. Starting from there, the church manifests what it is, the sacrament of the trinitarian koinonia.”\textsuperscript{155} Here we have the first and clearest description in this dialogue of what the two churches agree the church \textit{is}.

As to how the church is formed, the dialogue is clear to say that it is not the consequence of human effort. Instead, “[t]here is a ‘Jerusalem, from on high’ which ‘comes down from God’, a communion which is at the foundation of the community itself. The church comes into being by a free gift, that of the new creation.”\textsuperscript{156} As this “koinonia takes shape in the church celebrating the eucharist” it has three main aspects: the eschatological, the kerygmatic, and the pneumatological.\textsuperscript{157} And it is the bishop who serves as the representative of and the one responsible for the local church in communion

\textsuperscript{156} Mystery II.1; \textit{GiA II}, 654.
\textsuperscript{157} Mystery II.2; \textit{GiA II}, 655.
with other churches.\textsuperscript{158} Here \textit{Mystery} refers to Hippolytus as a quasi-proof text for the Orthodox understanding of how the office of bishop is an expression of the whole church, since he is elected by the people of a local congregation and then receives the grace of ministry through the laying-on of hands by neighboring bishops. \textit{Mystery} does not quote Hippolytus at this point, but it seems clear that the reference would be to the \textit{Apostolic Tradition} 2-4.\textsuperscript{159}

Finally, the last emphasis on this point is, “[f]ar from excluding diversity or plurality, the koinonìa supposes it and heals the wounds of division, transcending the latter in unity.”\textsuperscript{160} Recognition of local congregations by one another is of paramount importance, and \textit{Mystery} refers to John of Chrysostom as precedent for the conditions of recognition: first, communion in kerygma, then communion in love, and finally communion in service.\textsuperscript{161} In this common recognition, the church finds healing of division and true unity. This work returns the church to the vision of the New Testament:

\begin{quote}
We find then among these churches those bonds of communion which the New Testament indicated: communion in faith, hope and love, communion in the sacraments, communion in the diversity of charisms, communion in the reconciliation, communion in the ministry. The agent of this communion is the Spirit of the risen Lord. Through him the church universal, catholic, integrates diversity or plurality, making it one of its own essential elements.\textsuperscript{162}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{158} \textit{Mystery} II.3&4; \textit{GiA II}, 656.
\textsuperscript{160} \textit{Mystery} III.2; \textit{GiA II}, 657.
\textsuperscript{161} \textit{Mystery} III.3; \textit{GiA II}, 658.
\textsuperscript{162} \textit{Mystery} III.4; \textit{GiA II}, 658. This last point leads right into the 1993 statement, \textit{Uniatism: Method of Union of the Past, and the Present Search for Full Communion}, where the two churches explain how communion ecclesiology has helped each move beyond a uniatist view of ecumenism: “On each side it is recognized that what Christ has entrusted to his church – profession of apostolic faith, participation in the sacraments, above all the one priesthood celebrating the one sacrifice of Christ, the apostolic succession of bishops – cannot be considered the exclusive property of one of our churches. … It is in this perspective that the Catholic churches and the Orthodox churches recognize each other as sister churches, responsible together for maintaining the church of God in fidelity to the divine purpose, most especially in what concerns unity” (\textit{GiA II}, 681).
Thus we have a brief sketch of how communion ecclesiology has been portrayed in the Eastern Orthodox churches through some of the bilateral dialogues between the Eastern Orthodox and other churches. In these dialogues we saw how the fathers were used as sources for understanding doctrine (first, the church’s oneness and catholicity and second, how the faithful are bound together in the one body of Christ in the Eucharist), as a quasi-proof text for the Orthodox position understanding of the office of bishop as a expression of the whole church, and as precedent for how local congregations can recognize one another.

Now we need to move on to the ways communion ecclesiology has surfaced in the life and thought of the World Council of Churches. In this examination, some of the work from the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC needs attention, since it is here that the reflective theological work of the WCC is found and from which much of the preparatory work for WCC assemblies and statements comes.

The World Council of Churches

In this section we will explore how the WCC made use of and incorporated elements of communion ecclesiology when addressing the very nature and makeup of the WCC itself. I should stress here that the WCC does not view itself as a church, but as an organization in which various churches can come together to confess their common faith and work in common in obedience to God. We will also explore how the WCC used the church fathers when it focused on the ministerial office(s) and essence of the church. The WCC used the fathers to defend an ecclesial practice or belief which reflects the unity of
the church. It used the fathers as a source for understanding the doctrine of the church’s unity. And it used the fathers as evidence for koinonia language for understanding the nature of the church.

From the beginning of the WCC with its first assembly in Amsterdam in 1948, the unity of the church has been formulated in terms of the Trinity for its very existence and in language akin to the third article of the Nicene Creed. While there is no explicit reference to koinonia, the operative image for the church is the Body of Christ.163

Only two years later, in 1950, the WCC Central Committee met in Toronto, Canada to draft what has become the touchstone for ecclesial conversations regarding the WCC itself. However, this Toronto meeting is also important for the larger ecumenical scene, not least because of the tension within the WCC between the Orthodox and Protestant views of what church is. The Toronto Statement (as the Committee’s text has come to be known) delineates what the WCC is and what it is not. Yet, in describing what it is, we have the first crucial use of the term ‘fellowship’: “There is room and space in the World Council for the ecclesiology of every church which is ready to participate in the ecumenical conversation and which takes its stand on the Basis of the Council, which is ‘a fellowship of Churches which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour.’”164 However, this use of fellowship is not in line with communion ecclesiology, since the Toronto Statement takes great pains to define the WCC not as a church, but rather an organization of churches that assembles in order to work for unity.

In 1954, the WCC’s second assembly convened in Evanston, IL, where the “Report of the Advisory Commission on the Main Theme of the Second Assembly: Christ – The Hope of the World” gives a much fuller understanding of the church’s nature and mission than any previous WCC work. Here the church is described as witness and sign, as “the Body whose members are members of Christ,” and as “the field where the glory of God … will be revealed to the whole created universe.” When speaking of the unity of the church, the Report uses the additional terms “Kingdom of God” and “a society not of the perfect but of those who are in constant need of God’s grace and mercy” (emphasis added).

The New Delhi Assembly of 1961 extends the trajectory set in Amsterdam when the Report of the Section on Unity begins by describing the church’s unity in trinitarian terms in the very first paragraph. The second paragraph uses the term “fellowship” again, not in terms of the WCC itself, but in terms of the church’s unity. Again, this description is very familiarly creedal. The larger phrase in which the term “fellowship” is found reads “We believe that the unity which is both God’s will and his gift to his Church is being made visible as all in each place who are baptized into Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord and Saviour are brought by the Holy Spirit into one fully committed fellowship” (emphasis added).

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166 Second Assembly, 15.
167 Second Assembly, 22.
And it is here that we need to pay particular attention, since this is the kind of terminology used when the Report comes closest to a definition of the church. Indeed, the language of *koinonia* arises at this point:

The word ‘fellowship’ (*koinonia*) has been chosen because it describes what the Church truly is. ‘Fellowship’ clearly implies that the Church is not merely an institution or organization. It is a fellowship of those who are called together by the Holy Spirit and in baptism confess Christ as Lord and Saviour. They are thus ‘fully committed’ to him and to one another.\(^{169}\)

Notwithstanding the terminology, the ecclesiology is still (naturally enough at this time in the life of the WCC) underdeveloped. Additionally, it is temptingly Protestant since such comments can be read as having an individualist tendency; both in the sense that the church is comprised of a collection of individuals who have this particular confession concerning Jesus and in the sense that it is this confession that seems to make the unity of the church visible to the world through such comprising. Though subtle, this is the nuance between the church being called *into unity* (as if beginning from various points of fragmentation) and the church being called *and for that reason already in unity*.

It is not until the preparatory work for and publication of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (*BEM* or the Lima text) that we find specific texts from Faith and Order that deal with the issue of ecclesiology *per se* and with references to sources for such a discussion. While *BEM* does not express a particular ecclesiology, there are traces of communion ecclesiology which emerge at various points. The section on baptism states, “Through baptism, Christians are brought into union with Christ, with each other and with the Church of every time and place. … Therefore, our one baptism into Christ constitutes a

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call to the churches to overcome their divisions and visibly manifest their fellowship.”  
Likewise, in the section on the Eucharist, “The eucharistic communion with Christ who nourishes the life of the Church is at the same time communion within the body of Christ which is the Church.”  
Finally, in the section on ministry, “The Holy Spirit unites in a single body those who follow Jesus Christ and sends them as witnesses into the world. Belonging to the Church means living in communion with God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. … God’s purpose is that, in Jesus Christ, all people should share in this fellowship.”

It is an interesting feature of BEM that when it refers to the early church or a church father, it does so in order to defend a practice or belief as that practice or belief reflects the unity of the church. For Baptism, the Lima text states: “The universal practice of baptism by the apostolic Church from its earliest days is attested in letters of the New Testament, the Acts of the Apostles, and the writings of the Fathers.” For the Eucharist, one of the “Commentary” paragraphs cites ancient liturgies to explain how the “invocation of the Holy Spirit was made both on the community and on the elements of bread and wine,” thereby enriching the sense of union between the Spirit and the Son and between God and the church. For Ministry, BEM notes that the setting aside of some for the special purpose of ministry through ordination has happened “since very early times.” Likewise, the role of bishop, and in particular the succession of bishops, is

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171 BEM, 14.
172 BEM, 20.
173 BEM, 1.
174 BEM, 13.
175 BEM, 21.
mentioned as an aspect of the “growing Church in the early centuries” which “was understood as serving, symbolizing and guarding the continuity of the apostolic faith and communion.”176 In a “Commentary” paragraph for this point, BEM makes its only mention of any specific non-Biblical evidence when it notes the views of Clement of Rome and Ignatius of Antioch on episcopal succession: Clement emphasizes the historical continuity of faith through succession, while Ignatius emphasizes the spiritual reality of the apostolic community through succession.177 BEM does not cite specific passages for these fathers, but it seems that the most likely texts for Clement regarding historical continuity would be I Clement 44.1-6, in which Clement addresses some strife that had arisen in Corinth regarding succession in the offices of ministry. Clement urges the Corinthians to accept that those who had been placed in offices of ministry by the apostles, and especially those who were meant to succeed them, are there on a permanent basis and none should unseat them. For Ignatius, the usual texts would be Magnesians 6.1 and Smyrnaeans 8.1; texts that speak of analogous hierarchies between the order of ministers in the church and the order of the godhead thus implying an inherent divine design for the former. A couple of other possibilities for Ignatius might be the Salutation of the letter to the Philadelphians and Ephesians 3.2 and 4.1 which urge harmony within the church just as there in harmony in God.

About a decade after BEM, there were two statements and one extended study that began to explore more fully what ecclesial shape the unity sought in the Ecumenical Movement might take. The first statement is the document “The Unity of the Church as

176 BEM, 29.
177 BEM, 29. For an interesting essay giving a perspective on what might be missing historically from BEM and how that can affect both the descriptions and recommendations from Lima, see Reiner Kaczynski’s “The Lima Text in the Light of Historical Research,” Studia Liturgica 16 (1986): 22-39.
Koinonia: Gift and Calling” that was adopted at the seventh assembly of the WCC in Canberra, Australia in 1991. The Canberra statement claims that God’s purpose is “to gather the whole of creation under the lordship of Christ Jesus, in whom, by the power of the Holy Spirit, all are brought into communion with God,” and the purpose of the church is “to unite people with Christ in the power of the Spirit.” More expressly, the document continues on to claim:

The unity of the church to which we are called is a koinonia given and expressed in the common confession of the apostolic faith; a common sacramental life entered by the one baptism and celebrated together in one eucharistic fellowship; a common life in which members and ministries are mutually recognized and reconciled; and a common mission witnessing to the gospel of God’s grace to all people and serving the whole of creation.

Soon after the WCC assembly in Canberra, the Faith and Order Commission met in Santiago de Compostela, Spain in 1993 and heartily continued in the theme of koinonia, especially the relationship of the koinonia of God with the koinonia of the church. Yet without deliberately using the unity-in-difference expressed when addressing the Trinity, the Commission’s “Message to the Churches” maintains “[a] test of our koinonia is how we live with those with whom we disagree.” The phrase “unity-in-difference” describes the thought that the unity of the church can be gained through the various diversities or differences experienced by specific church bodies. As a correlation, diversity serves to aid unity, so there is an implicit limit or check on the amount and kind of diversity allowed.

The extended study from Faith and Order entitled Confessing the One Faith likewise exhibits aspects of communion ecclesiology in its explication of the third article

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of the Nicene Creed. And, interestingly, in a document with scant footnotes and few internal references to anything other than Scripture, there is one lone and significant reference to a patristic source, Cyprian. It is also interesting to note that this reference comes on the subject of the church. In unpacking the creedal phrase, “we believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church” the study document is replete with “communion” language. It states:

The Church is the community of those who are in communion with Christ and, through him, with one another. … The life and unity of the Church are grounded in the communion of the Trinity. … Thus the Church is “the people united by the unity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

This last phrase, in quotation marks, is from Cyprian’s On the Lord’s Prayer 23. Even when the document speaks of the church as the Body of Christ, communion language is present. As Confessing states, “The veritable fruit of salvation, communion, renewed and re-established between God and humankind, between humans and the world of creation, is brought about and is manifested by the holy mystery of the Body of Christ.” Here the WCC uses the fathers as a source for understanding the doctrine of the church’s unity.

Finally, the last WCC document for our consideration is the most recent The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement, again from the Faith and Order Commission. The greater part of the document explores four of the most important “insights” regarding the church from the New Testament: people of God, Body of Christ, Temple of the Holy Spirit, and koinonia. These four “have been

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182 Confessing the One Faith, 84.
183 Confessing the One Faith, 85.
chosen for particular comment because, taken together, they illuminate the New Testament vision of the Church in relation to the Triune God.” By way of introduction to these four insights, the church is called a gift of God, created by the Word and the Holy Spirit. As such, the church is first and foremost described as a communion: “[t]he Church is the communion of those who, by means of their encounter with the Word, stand in a living relationship with God, who speaks to them and calls forth their trustful response; it is the communion of the faithful.”

The sections on the people of God, the Body of Christ, and the Temple of the Holy Spirit correspond, obviously enough, with the three persons of the Trinity and are only a couple of paragraphs each. However, the section on koinonia posits koinonia as the central notion, thereby making the connections between the first three insights explicit. Indeed, the document states, “the biblical images already treated, as well as others … evoke the nature and quality of the relationship of God’s people to God, to one another and to the created order. The term koinonia expresses the reality to which these images refer.” This last sentence is crucial, since it confirms that the WCC is espousing the view that the church does in reality have an essence, and that essence is koinonia. Not only is this understanding of the essence of the church for the benefit of the church, but for the whole world as well, “It is God’s design to gather all creation under the Lordship of Christ … and to bring humanity and all creation into communion.”

185 The Nature and Mission of the Church, §17.
186 The Nature and Mission of the Church, §10.
187 The Nature and Mission of the Church, §27 (emphasis added).
188 The Nature and Mission of the Church, §34.
Interestingly, the only place where sources other than Scripture are used in *The Nature and Mission of the Church* is in the section “The Church as Koinonia/Communion.” While the reference is in passing and not specific, it is important because it shows a perspective of the church’s tradition and catholicity. The paragraph is worth quoting at length:

The biblical notion of koinonia has become central in the quest for a common understanding of the nature of the Church and its visible unity. The term koinonia (communion, participation, fellowship, sharing) is found not only in the New Testament but also in later periods, especially in patristic and Reformation writings which describe the Church. Although in some periods the term largely fell out of use, it is being reclaimed today as a key to understanding the nature and mission of the Church. Due to its richness of meaning, it is also ecumenically useful in appreciating the various forms and extent of communion already enjoyed by the Churches.¹⁸⁹

In this passage, the WCC uses “the patristic writings” as evidence of *koinonia* language for understanding the church. Here the WCC is participating, in a way, in the project of *ressourcement* as it recalls the ways in which *koinonia* has been used and how the WCC itself finds the term helpful in describing and ascertaining the kinds of unity expressed between churches currently.

So, here we have the history of communion ecclesiology in the WCC, most expressly in the work of the Faith and Order Commission. Admittedly, it is inaccurate to claim that the WCC *has* an ecclesiology of any particular sort (given the weight of the fairly early Toronto Statement). Nevertheless, it is clear that aspects of communion ecclesiology have been present in the work of the WCC since as early as the Toronto Statement, and that these aspects have grown and expanded in scope and importance in the life of the WCC when considering the church’s existence and life. It is important to

notice that the WCC has grown in appreciation of the tradition of the church’s larger history when making such considerations (here we can see the influence of the Orthodox churches, for instance).

In summary we can say that the WCC has incorporated the church fathers in its more extensive and later work on the church itself. For the earlier documents which covered the WCC, its essence and makeup, the church fathers were not used. There were traces and elements of communion ecclesiology present, but not in association with the church fathers. When we get to BEM, Confessing the One Faith, and The Nature and Mission of the Church, the WCC used the church fathers to help explicate episcopal succession and the church as communion. BEM referred to Clement of Rome to highlight the historical aspects of succession and Ignatius of Antioch to highlight the spiritual and to defend a practice or belief which reflects the unity of the church. Confessing the One Faith used Cyprian’s didacticism about the Lord’s Prayer as a source for understanding the doctrine the unity of the Trinity as the foundation of and for the unity of the church. Finally, The Nature and Mission of the Church made reference to the frequency of the term koinonia in patristic writings on the church as evidence for how we can approach an understanding of the church as koinonia.

Roman Catholicism

The third place where communion ecclesiology takes shape is the Roman Catholic Church. A bit unlike both the Orthodox and World Council of Churches discussions above, there was a time when the Roman Catholic Church came to a full sense of communion ecclesiology, specifically at the 1985 Extraordinary Synod, which it
offered retrospectively as the key for interpreting Vatican II. 190 It is accurate to say that there have been traces and elements of communion ecclesiology emerging in Roman Catholic thought (both from individual theologians and official church writings) since even the sixteenth century. In the following pages I will briefly touch on a representative sample of these traces and elements as they led up to and encompassed the 1985 Extraordinary Synod.

Along the way, we will examine how the fathers were used in three key texts. In Jérôme Hamer’s *The Church is a Communion*, Hamer uses the fathers to demonstrate that there was a practice of communion ecclesiology in the early church even if there was not a theory of it, and he uses them to promote an organic, non-hierarchical view of the communion, focused on the assembly of believers. Vatican II’s *Lumen Gentium* uses the fathers to explain and defend Roman Catholic views on the eschatological importance of the church, the Holy Spirit’s role in animating the body of Christ which is the Church, and the unity of the Church as expressed in the office of bishop. Likewise, the Council’s *Unitatis Redintegratio* uses the fathers in support of recognizing the Eucharists of the Eastern Churches and to uphold the view that there is a universal effect of baptism in the name of the triune God.

In his essay “Concepts of Communion, Past and Present,” Joseph Komonchak explores the differences in the concept of communion from Robert Bellarmine to Johann Franzelin to Vatican II. 191 Bellarmine (1542-1621) was an Italian Jesuit who taught theology at the Collegium Romanum and argued vigorously and successfully against

Protestant positions. Franzlin (1818-86) was an Austrian Jesuit who taught at the Roman College who became a prominent and leading theologian in the preparations for Vatican I and at the Council itself. According to Komonchak, while Franzelin modified what he had inherited from Bellarmine and made his view of the church more open and pliable than Bellarmine, the greatest difference is between these two men and Vatican II itself, where the church’s inner and more spiritual aspects are exposed and reflected upon.

As Komonchak demonstrates, Bellarmine’s definition of the church was largely made with the specific task in mind to deny various Protestant views. As such, it is ostensibly a juridical definition; that is, the church is known as that “group of men brought together by the profession of the same Christian faith and by communion in the same sacraments under the governance of the legitimate pastors, especially of the one vicar of Christ on earth, the Roman Pontiff.”192 Where Bellarmine does use words and phrases that are related to communion and unity, they are used in a similarly narrow juridical fashion, centering on obedience. Komonchak states:

In none of the places where these words occur, referring either to participation in the sacraments or to membership in the one corporate body, do they refer to communion in the divine life or to a fellowship among Christians derived from it. The “communio sacramentum” is merely external, and the “communio membrorum inter se et cum capite” is mere submission to authority.193

Bellarmine’s notion of communion therefore is narrowly one-dimensional, viewing ecclesial communion as being sharply and absolutely defined in terms of visible union with and submission to the church in Rome and especially the pope.

192 Quoted from Komonchak, “Concepts,” 322.
Franzelin may have made some strides in overcoming the limitations of Bellarmine’s ecclesiology, yet limitations remain. Franzelin’s ecclesiology incorporates more of an eschatological and incarnational sense than does Bellarmine’s, and so is richer and fuller. However, these aspects have difficulty making themselves known in the visible and public life of the church for Franzelin. When considering who makes up the church, Franzelin remains in the same place as Bellarmine. As Komonchak states: “If Franzelin’s ecclesiology, when compared to Bellarmine’s, makes far more room for the spiritual and christological communion at the heart of the Church, he cannot be said to have successfully integrated this dimension into the discussion of the visible society of believers.”  

Using these two examples, Komonchak draws some general conclusions concerning “[w]hat passed for communio in the understanding of the Church that dominated post-Reformation Catholic ecclesiology.” First, it designated the unity Catholics had with one another as shown in their corporate confession of faith and obedience to bishops, particularly the pope. Second, given this hard view of the boundaries of the church, only those in the church’s midst were accounted as being in the church’s communion (and thereby contributing to the possibility of salvation.) Third, since “the spiritual and substantive dimensions of communio” are not under consideration within the life of the church, there is no reason or means for it to be so between churches, or between the church and other groups of people claiming Jesus as Lord. Fourth, the

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“world” is seen as either those persons outside the church or the powers of the principalities which struggle against the church.

When Komonchak arrives at a review of Vatican II, he uses these four characteristics of the two expressions of Bellarmine and Franzelin, which had been the dominant view until Vatican II. On the first count (Catholic unity through corporate confession of faith and obedience to bishops), Vatican II recovers “the inner, spiritual substance of Church-communion as something more than a social unity under legitimate authority.” Second (only those visibly in the church’s midst were in the church’s communion), this recovery of the internal spiritual life meshes with a renewed sense of what church is, largely because the council recognized that the church cannot simply be marked by “external or visible criteria” due to the admission that true participation in the church involves a communion with the Spirit. Third (the spiritual and substantive dimensions of communio are not proper criteria), these first two points lead the council to more nuances regarding the presence of aspects of the church in other Christian communities and the work of God in non-Christian groups of people (both religious and atheistic). Fourth (that the “world” is anyone outside the church), there is a modified view of the world and the church’s relation to it. The church does not exist for itself, but for the sake of the world. To this end, the communion of the church with God anticipates a communion of all creation with God in the eschaton.196

So, with Komonchak’s essay there was a basic change-over-time distinction between a focus on the importance of the external reality of the church to a focus on the importance of the internal reality of the church. Moreover, Komonchak’s work alerts us

to the fact that the term ‘communion’ was often used in a juridical manner prior to Vatican II and we need to be historically conscious to this.

One of the many important Roman Catholic theologians of the twentieth century to work on ecclesiology was Jérôme Hamer. Hamer was secretary of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity from 1969 until 1973. He was also the secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith from 1973 until 1984. Hamer’s *The Church is a Communion* was written on the very eve of Vatican II (1962-65) and was heavily influenced by the 1943 encyclical *Mystici Corporis* of Pope Pius XII, which emphasizes the unity of the church as the Mystical Body of Christ while exclusively identifying the Roman Catholic Church as such.197 In his book, Hamer speculates on the nature of the church. In doing so he begins with an exploration of some key biblical terms for the church (church, people, body, and kingdom), then moves to Aquinas (since this is a main focus of *Mystici Corporis*, on Hamer’s reading), and comes to a definition. The remaining two-thirds of the book examines the possibilities raised by such a view.

Hamer defines the church as “the mystical body of Christ … a communion which is at once inward and external, an inner communion of spiritual life (of faith, hope and charity) signified and engendered by an external communion in profession of the faith, discipline and the sacramental life.”198 This definition of the church leads Hamer to treat equally the ordained and the laity while expounding the mission of the church. Each of

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198 Hamer, *The Church is a Communion*, 93.
the ordained (obviously including priests and bishops, along with the pope) and the laity have aspects of their life in the church which are both internal and external. The communion of the church rests then in the integration of all these factors:

Although, within the communion the priestly hierarchy provides the structure, it should not be forgotten that the communion thus constituted is itself summoned to play an active part, generating growth and vitality in the Church. The entire priestly people is called to ‘proclaim the exploits of the God who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light’ (1 Peter 2:9).\textsuperscript{199}

Thus, while Hamer places the priesthood as the first of what he terms “the generative causes of communion,” he places great weight on the laity and together “the entire priestly people” as being the very cause of their own life, a cause in turn brought about by the work of Christ’s Spirit internally.

Hamer argues that the church can in fact be called a communion, “but only on condition that [the term communion] is not shorn of any of the components it has acquired during its long history.”\textsuperscript{200} Hamer offers five such components. First, communion describes “a way of being in the Church,” the order of sociability.\textsuperscript{201} Second, the term communion has come to denote the relationships between believers and between the churches, i.e., the Latin and Oriental rites of Catholicism. Third, and maybe more directly theological, Hamer writes that communion has two “aspects,” that between God and believers and that between believers with one another. The former brings about the latter. Fourth, we can speak of external and internal forms of communion. The external form is comprised of the social and sacramental life, while the internal is

\textsuperscript{199} Hamer, \textit{The Church is a Communion}, 94.
\textsuperscript{200} Hamer, \textit{The Church is a Communion}, 173-74.
\textsuperscript{201} Hamer, \textit{The Church is a Communion}, 174.
comprised of the life of grace and charity. Fifth, the external communion is hierarchical with the bishops, and eventually the pope, serving as the “factor of authority.”

In rehearsing this history briefly, Hamer goes over the patristic era for the sole purpose of showing that in the church’s earliest years there was *communio* even if there was not a *theory* of it. This is an important use of the fathers for Hamer. His study demonstrates that for the patristic period, communion was a way of being in the church that quickly gave way to institutional expression. Underlying this understanding of communion was a sense of communion as relationship, whether between particular churches or individual believers. This communion also had meaning for the connections the church has with God as well as the connections made between humans.

Hamer uses both Irenaeus and Augustine to discuss the relation of the Spirit to the church. In so doing there is another important use Hamer makes of the fathers: to promote an organic view of the church as communion, focused on the assembly of the people in the presence of God, only slightly touching on the hierarchical aspects of the church’s life. In his *Adversus Haereses* III.24.1, Irenaeus writes, “Where the Church is, there the Spirit of God is too, and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and all its grace.” Augustine champions the theme of the Spirit as the soul of the church. Moreover, Hamer cites John Chrysostom and Augustine when he comments on the long tradition of exegesis on Matthew 18:20 (“Where two or three are gathered…”). In his *Homilies on Hebrews* XIX, Chrysostom notes how important the assembly of believers is, likening the increase in charity which follows to the sharpness of a blade after honing.

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202 Hamer, *The Church is a Communion*, 176.
203 Hamer, *The Church is a Communion*, 168.
204 Hamer, *The Church is a Communion*, 183-4.
In his *Confessions* VIII 2.4, Augustine highlights the importance of the assembly as a proper understanding of the church, relating an exchange between Simplicianus and Victorinus wherein the former chides the latter for thinking himself a Christian by simply reading Scripture and yet not being part of the church (i.e., the assembly, not the building, as Victorinus retorts).

205 Besides Hamer there are a number of Catholic theologians who developed ecclesiology of communion. Among them are Charles Journet, Yves Congar, and Henri de Lubac. I will briefly comment on three of these three theologians simply demonstrating that they used the fathers, but space does not allow me to examine in particular how they used them. The following few paragraphs will give brief descriptions of their contributions and are heavily influenced by Dennis Doyle’s *Communion Ecclesiology: Vision and Versions* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Press, 2000); Lorelei Fuch’s *Koinonia and the Quest for an Ecumenical Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdman, 2008); and Hans Boersma’s *Nouvelle Theologie and Sacramental Ontology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Charles Journet’s (1891-1975) main work was his 1941 *L’Eglise du Verb incarné*. The key contribution of Journet was to challenge and overturn the neo-Scholastic manuals of Roman Catholicism and their teaching on the church. Journet understood the Holy Spirit to be what definitively makes the church what it is, a view different from the manuals which put the church’s hierarchy in that role. In doing so, however, Journet was not espousing a significant change in the role or understanding of the hierarchy, only that there be a change in focus on the formal cause of the church’s existence.

The Dominican Yves Congar (1904-1996) was highly ecumenically sensitive and directed from early on; one of his first works was his 1937 *Chrétiens désunis or Divided Christendom*, in which he recognized and promoted the need for ecumenical relationship between Catholics and Anglicans and Orthodox. Prior to Vatican II he wrote significant pieces such as *Lay People in the Church* (French original, 1953), *The Mystery of the Church* (French original, 1956), and *Tradition and the Traditions* (French original, 1960). He was a very influential participant at Vatican II. His communion ecclesiology might best be described, in Lorelei Fuchs’ terms, as one of plenitude, since he had wrestled “with the tensions between the fundamentals essential for unity and the richness given in diversity” (Fuchs, 107). Congar’s ecclesiology of plenitude maintains two key aspects. First, as both Lorelei Fuchs and Hans Boersma explain, for Congar, the fellowship of the church both is the church and is constituted by the church. That is, the community of the faithful makes up the church and it is that which makes members of the church (Fuchs, 106 and Boersma, 270). Second, as Dennis Doyle and Boersma demonstrate, Congar stressed the relationship between the church and history: the church is engaged in history; it is, in turn, developing historically; and it is the place in which history and sacrament are combined (Doyle, 38 and 50, and Boersma, 275-81).

The French Jesuit Henri de Lubac (1896-1991) wrote a number of pieces in which he explored his theology of communion: *Catholicism* (French original, 1938), *The Splendor of the Church* (French original, 1953), and *The Church: Paradox and Mystery* (French original, 1967). He was one of the founders the collection *Sources Chrétiens*, an assembled series of patristic and medieval texts, and a peritus at Vatican II. Doyle investigates how de Lubac’s communion ecclesiology consists of the historical and spiritual dimensions of the church as it lives in the world (Doyle, 59-60). More comprehensively, de Lubac’s communion ecclesiology holds in place the mutual importance of the divine, mystical, sacramental, social, and historical realities of the church (Doyle, 63-70). In doing so, as Boersma points out, de Lubac is able to argue, “the institutional and hierarchical aspect of the Church was always the provisional means that served the mystical and communal aspect” (Boersma, 260).
important to notice that Hamer uses the fathers much more frequently than the encyclical itself.

The final portion of this section will briefly examine communion ecclesiology and Vatican II. There is an ongoing debate as to whether a kind of communion ecclesiology was the intention of the council or whether it is an ecclesiology that has been emerging from the council.\textsuperscript{206} Here however, my main goal is to point out the elements of communion ecclesiology that are clearly present in two of the documents from Vatican II: \textit{Lumen Gentium} (hereafter \textit{LG}) and \textit{Unitatis Redintegratio} (hereafter \textit{UR}).

\textit{Lumen Gentium} exhibits some of the key characteristics of communion ecclesiology as we have so far explored it. From the very outset, \textit{LG} speaks in trinitarian terms, expressing how it is that God’s plan for the redemption of the whole creation takes place because of the obedience of the Son and through the power of the Holy Spirit. In doing so \textit{LG} cites various patristic sources, including, for example, Augustine, Chrysostom, Irenaeus, and Ignatius. Here \textit{LG} uses the fathers to explain the eschatological importance of the church. \textit{LG} begins with an eschatological claim that the church was prepared through the history of Israel for a final culmination, “At the end of time it will gloriously achieve completion, when, as is read in the Fathers, all the just from Adam and ‘from Abel, the just one, to the last of the elect,’ will be gathered together with the Father in the universal Church.”\textsuperscript{207} This gathering together is accomplished through the work of the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit, such that, as

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{206} Indeed, in the Final Report of the 1985 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, the bishops claim that the notion of communion is seminal and foundational for the Second Vatican Council. Other theologians, e.g., Jean-Marie Tillard, Avery Dulles, and George Tavard, however, argue for a greater sense of progression regarding the Roman Catholic Church’s understanding of communion ecclesiology.
\item \textsuperscript{207} \textit{LG} 2. The reference to Abel and the last of the elect comes from Augustine’s Sermon 341.11 where he argues against the Arians on the role of Christ in the church.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Cyprian writes, the church is known “as a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

At this point, LG relates the Kingdom of God to the Church, noting the various ways in which the Old Testament uses metaphors to describe the former and the New Testament the latter. Yet, in closing out the first chapter, LG settles on the image of the Body of Christ to describe the nature, purpose, and function of the Church:

In the human nature united to Himself the Son of God, by overcoming death through His own death and resurrection, redeemed man and re-molded him into a new creation. By communicating His Spirit, Christ made His brothers, called together from all nations, mystically the components of His own Body.

Later in this same passage LG references another of Augustine’s sermons, Sermon 268.2, along with one of John of Chrysostom’s, Homily on Ephesians 9, to explain and defend the Roman Catholic view of the Holy Spirit’s animation of the body, which occurs because he is the same Spirit of animation in both the Head and the members. Thus he “gives life to, unifies and moves through the whole body. This He does in such a way that His work could be compared by the holy Fathers with the function which the principle of life, that is, the soul, fulfills in the human body.” When LG writes that all people are to become part of this body, in an eschatological hope, it again cites the fathers. John Chrysostom’s Homily 65 on the Gospel of John is quoted when LG states, “All the faithful, scattered though they be throughout the world, are in communion with each other in the Holy Spirit, and so ‘he who dwells in Rome knows that the people of India are his members.’” Likewise, LG refers to Irenaeus’ Adversus Haereses III.16.6

208 LG 4. The reference is to Cyprian’s On the Lord’s Prayer 23.
209 LG 7.
210 LG 7.
211 LG 13.
when it writes, “By reason of [its universality], the Catholic Church strives constantly and with due effect to bring all humanity and all its possessions back to its source in Christ, with Him as its head and united in His Spirit.”

Another key aspect to communion ecclesiology we have examined is a deep connection between the church and the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. And while, when speaking of bishops, LG stresses “[a]mong the principal duties of bishops the preaching of the Gospel occupies an eminent place,” there is not much emphasis on the unity which the preached gospel brings. When it comes to the Eucharist, however, the issue of unity expressed in the office of bishop is paramount:

In any community of the altar, under the sacred ministry of the bishop, there is exhibited a symbol of that charity and “unity of the mystical Body, without which there can be no salvation.” In these communities, though frequently small and poor, or living in the Diaspora, Christ is present, and in virtue of His presence there is brought together one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. For “the partaking of the body and blood of Christ does nothing other than make us be transformed into that which we consume.”

Here LG is using the fathers to defend the Catholic view of the role of the bishop in relation to the Eucharist. The reference in the above quotation to the unity of the mystical body is from Ignatius’ *Letter to the Smyrnaeans* 8.1, and the phrase concerning the partaking of the body and blood is from Leo the Great’s Sermon 63.7 on the Passion of Christ. Moreover, LG states, “the faithful must cling to their bishop, as the Church does to Christ, and Jesus Christ to the Father, so that all may be of one mind through

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212 LG 13  At the end of chapter II on the church as the people of God, LG 17 uses both the *Didache* 14 and Irenaeus’ *Adv. Haer.* IV.17.5 to gloss a direct quotation from Malachi in order to stress the work and mission of the church, which is both to pray and to labor “in order that the entire world may become the People of God, the Body of the Lord and the Temple of the Holy Spirit, and that in Christ, the Head of all, all honor and glory may be rendered to the Creator and Father of the Universe.”

213 LG 25.

214 LG 26.
unity, and abound to the glory of God.” In so writing, it is depending on Ignatius’ Letter to the Ephesians 6.1, and on his Letter to the Philadelphians 4 when it claims priests “constitute one priesthood with their bishop although bound by a diversity of duties.”

The role of the individual bishop in relationship to other bishops, and the bishop of Rome, is of prime importance in LG. Indeed, this is one of the main characteristics of the unity of the church from a Roman Catholic perspective. Hence, here we have a stress on the hierarchical structure of the Roman Church. Even so, LG is careful to emphasize the fullness of ecclesial life in the local congregation. Indeed, “[t]his Church of Christ is truly present in all legitimate local congregations of the faithful which, united with their pastors, are themselves called churches of the New Testament.” In this way, the church’s unity comes from being the Body of Christ, which is also the People of God.

There is some difference of opinion among Roman Catholics concerning how to interpret Vatican II on whether and how well the church is living into the ecclesial unity desired by God. The two basic texts in dispute are Lumen Gentium (in particular, the subsistit in phrase from LG 8) and Unitatis Redintegratio. In documents such as Dominus Iesus, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has expounded and defended a view which claims that the Roman Catholic Church retains a kind of unity that does not exist in any other church or ecclesial communion. True particular churches are those which have retained apostolic succession and a valid Eucharist (i.e., Orthodox Churches), while ecclesial communions are those Christian communities which have not

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215 LG 27.
216 LG 28.
217 LG 26.
retained these but continue to baptize, incorporating those baptized into Christ and thereby into imperfect communion with the Roman Catholic Church.\footnote{The distinction is delineated in Dominus Iesus 16.} According to CDF texts like Dominus Iesus, the Roman Catholic Church’s unity is inextricably connected with apostolic succession and a valid Eucharist, along with the primacy of the bishop of Rome, the Pope. Thus for the CDF, the Roman Catholic Church does not share in the ways of Christian disunity like the other (properly called) churches and ecclesial communities.

There are those Roman Catholics who wish to nuance such a position. For example, Francis Sullivan and Karim Schelkens have written about other valid interpretations of Lumen Gentium which take into account certain linguistic and historical aspects of interpreting the phrase subsistit in.\footnote{See Francis A. Sullivan, “The Meaning of Subsistit in as Explained by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith,” Theological Studies 69:1 (2008): 116-24 and Karim Schelkens, “Lumen Gentium’s ‘Subsistit in’ Revisited: The Catholic Church and Christian Unity After Vatican II,” Theological Studies 69:4 (2008): 875-93.} Both Sullivan and Schelkens make room for the possibility that the Roman Catholic Church shares in the eschatological incompleteness of ecclesiological unity that other churches and ecclesial communions experience, albeit in its own way. Even so, neither of these theologians is arguing against the position that the Roman Catholic Church has within itself a juridical completeness.

Sullivan explores how the translation of subsistere into German has brought with it a set of scholastic and philosophical problems that center on the church’s ontology.\footnote{Sullivan, “The Meaning of Subsistit in,” 116-18.} The German phrases used for translation are ist verwirklicht in which means “is realized in” and hat ihre konkrete Existenzform in which means “has its concrete form of existence in.” Sullivan explains that these translations render a scholastic philosophical
understanding of *subsistit in* rather than a classical Latin understanding, which would mean simply “continues to exist.”221 The term is better rendered in other languages more in line with the classical Latin meaning, which leads Sullivan to claim that the use of *subsistere* departed from earlier uses of the term. Along a different line, Karim Schelkens traces some of the history of the people and events involved in the conversations during Vatican II which led to the change from *est* to *subsistit in*, arguing that this episode cannot be fully understood unless placed within the larger context of pre-conciliar controversies such as those surrounding the Modernist Movement and the *nouvelle théologie*. Moreover, Schelkens argues that any interpretation of *subsistit in* cannot be divorced from the fact that the phrase was adopted in a conciliar act, meaning that the conciliar fathers were surely aware of the significance of their decision which left us “a conciliar doctrine that is balanced and, precisely for that reason, of great interest for today’s theological effort.”222

Even before these more recent assessments, Catholic ecumenist Johannes Cardinal Willebrands weighed in on just this issue when he discussed the version of communion ecclesiology being shaped at Vatican II. The change from the term *est* to the phrase *subsistit in* to describe the relationship between the universal church and the Roman Catholic Church was – and remains – significant, and part of Willebrands’ evaluation was:

> It shows that the change from *est* to *subsistit in* has a bearing far beyond the strictly institutional. It has to do with grasping the implications of belonging to

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221 All of these German phrases and English translations are taken from Sullivan’s essay.

Christ. The standpoint is not juridical but Christological. The problem of *subsistit in* cannot be properly understood from any other standpoint.\(^{223}\)

Notwithstanding a good deal of interpretive debate regarding the *subsistit in* phrase since Vatican II, the key here is to note that the issue of self-reflection for the Catholic Church is foundationally an issue of Christological reflection. Or more generally, ecclesiology is primarily theological, not a post-theological reflection on application or structure.

Again, there are the main themes of communion ecclesiology in *UR* that we have seen throughout our examination. While *LG* is replete with references and allusions to the fathers, *UR* has only two, which will be discussed below. While *UR* only contains two references to the fathers, an examination is important for my project because it is the defining ecumenical document of Vatican II, and we should have a sense of what the conciliar fathers were up to with this text and their use of the fathers in it. The theme of *UR* is an unambiguous stress on the Trinity and the centrality of the Eucharist as the beginning of a set of “Catholic Principles on Ecumenism”:

> What has revealed the love of God among us is that the Father has sent into the world His only-begotten Son, so that, being made man, He might by His redemption give new life to the entire human race and unify it. … In His Church He instituted the wonderful sacrament of the Eucharist by which the unity of His Church is both signified and made a reality. He gave His followers a new commandment to love one another, and promised the Spirit, their Advocate, who, as Lord and life-giver, should remain with them forever.\(^{224}\)

Moreover, *UR* claims, “[t]his is the sacred mystery of the unity of the Church, in Christ and through Christ, the Holy Spirit energizing its various functions. It is a mystery that finds its highest exemplar and source in the unity of the Persons of the Trinity: the Father


\(^{224}\) *UR* 2. “Catholic Principles of Ecumenism” is the title of the first chapter of *UR.*
and the Son in the Holy Spirit, one God.” With specific reference to the “Christians of the East” and their celebrations of the Eucharist, \textit{UR} states, “through the celebration of the Holy Eucharist in each of these churches, the Church of God is built up and grows in stature, and through their concelebration, their communion with one another is made manifest.” The comment on the church being built up and growing comes from John Chrysostom’s \textit{Homily on John 46} in which he glosses the Bread of Life discourse from John 6 to extol the benefits of the church being the one body. Here \textit{UR} is using a church father in support of the Roman Catholic recognition of the Eucharists of the Eastern Churches.

Holding the Trinity as “exemplar and source” for unity, \textit{UR} admonishes the Roman Church to seek communion with all its separated brothers and sisters. There are various distances between churches, marking their disunity:

The differences that exist in varying degrees between [communities … separated from full communion with the Catholic Church] and the Catholic Church – whether in doctrine and sometimes in discipline, or concerning the structure of the Church – do indeed create many obstacles, sometimes serious ones, to full ecclesiastical communion. The ecumenical movement is striving to overcome these obstacles.

These distances or degrees can be overcome through the work of the Spirit in drawing the various churches and ecclesial communities closer to one another and to the triune God. The beginning of such overcoming is hoped to obtain through the means of grace, first among which is the sacrament of baptism.

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\item \textsuperscript{225} \textit{UR} 2.
\item \textsuperscript{226} \textit{UR} 15.
\item \textsuperscript{227} \textit{UR} 7. In addition, \textit{UR} 7 puts the matter nicely: “All the faithful should remember that the more effort they make to live holier lives according to the Gospel, the better will they further Christian unity and put it into practice. For the closer their union with the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, the more deeply and easily will they be able to grow in mutual brotherly love.”
\end{itemize}

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As *UR* states, “Baptism therefore establishes a sacramental bond of unity which links all who have been reborn by it.”\(^{228}\) To be sure, “it remains true that all who have been justified by faith in Baptism are members of Christ’s body, and have a right to be called Christian, and so are correctly accepted as brothers by the children of the Catholic Church.”\(^{229}\) While this seems clearly contradictory to *Mystici Corporis*, *UR*’s emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in the creation and sustenance of the church (\(UR\ 2-4\)) shows that the conciliar fathers were stressing the less institutional aspects of the church’s life. At this point *UR* uses the church fathers to buttress the Roman Catholic position that baptism in the name of the triune God has universal effect. *UR* refers here to Augustine’s *Exposition on Psalm 32* in order to make this point. In this piece, Augustine urges his fellow Christians to pray for the Donatists as brothers and sisters in the faith, which they are by virtue of their baptism (even though the Donatists did not recognize non-Donatist baptisms). Yet for all its importance in *UR*, baptism is limited to its role as a beginning, an initiation into a larger and deeper life that continues in profession of faith and reception of the Eucharist. Vatican II looks forward to the day when all churches and ecclesial communities will be able to come together and celebrate one Eucharist, thereby exhibiting their perfect unity with both God and one another.\(^{230}\)

So, both *LG* and *UR* make use of the fathers to make ecclesiological points that have elements and traces of communion ecclesiology within. *LG* uses the patristic notion that the church has an eschatological purpose in order to show how it is bound up in the Father’s will. The Constitution also cites the fathers to demonstrate how the Spirit is the

\(^{228}\) *UR* 22.
\(^{229}\) *UR* 3.
\(^{230}\) These two sentiments are expressed in *UR* 22 and 4, respectively.
one who animates the whole Body of Christ. Likewise, such sources are used to claim that the Eucharist brings unity by transforming believers (i.e., those who partake of the Eucharist) into the very likeness of the Son himself. *UR* also makes use of the fathers to buttress comments related to the sacraments. The Decree cites Chrysostom to show the centrality of the Eucharist for building up the Body of Christ, and it cites Augustine to argue for a near universal recognition of baptism.

In this section we have examined how an ecclesiology of communion has grown in the Roman Catholic Church from theologians like Bellarmine and Franzelin through Hamer and into Vatican II. Along the way I highlighted how Hamer used the fathers to demonstrate that *communio* was present in the early church even without a theory of it as well as how he used the fathers to promote a more organic and less hierarchical view of communion. We also saw how the Vatican II documents *LG* and *UR* made use of the fathers as sources in order to explain and support a Roman Catholic position, for example, on the role of the bishop in the Church or the recognition of the Eucharists of the Eastern Churches.

**Lutheranism**

The history of Lutheranism from the twentieth to the twenty-first centuries is one of convergence and merger. The missionary work of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries left various European-based Lutheran churches in different countries. In America, for instance, there were Lutherans from Germany, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark among other places. From the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries, these Lutheran churches (in America, in particular) have largely been engaged in finding ways
to live in a unity of Lutheran identity, including such options as merger. Something similar has played out for Lutherans around the world, especially in the twentieth century. At first, Lutherans met in meetings of the Lutheran World Convention. This convention held two meetings: in Eisenach, Germany (1923) and in Copenhagen, Denmark (1929). World War II made it impossible to hold any further meetings until 1947 when the Convention changed its name to the Lutheran World Federation (hereafter, LWF).

This section will explore the history of the LWF and how both elements of and a more comprehensive understanding of communion ecclesiology have been present within it. It will examine how the LWF has made use of elements of communion ecclesiology and the church fathers in two places, in the intra-Lutheran reflections of self-identity and in ecumenical relationships. While the church fathers feature in both explorations of Lutheran self-identity and ecumenical work, they are used more in the latter. The reason for this is because when Lutherans reflect upon Lutheran identity, they use two criteria: Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions; the church fathers are not in dispute when considering Lutheran-ness. Lutherans do have a history of reflecting on the fathers when defending a Lutheran position – as we saw in the chapter above on the sixteenth century. But Lutherans have not considered the church fathers as heavily in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries apart from ecumenical conversations.

I will forecast some examples of what we will see below. In some of the early intra-Lutheran studies, the church fathers are used as evidence to argue that there have been concerns about the unity or disunity of the church since the earliest centuries and to argue, as a related point, that this resulted in the early church working to maintain both
confessional and altar fellowship as signs of *communio*. Also in these early studies, the fathers are used as quasi-proof texts in order to mark a distinction between Lutherans and Catholics on the role of the bishop and to show the difference between the so-called Pauline missional fellowship (the supposedly more Lutheran) and the later institutional fellowship (the supposedly more Catholic). In more recent intra-Lutheran work, the church fathers have been used as theological sources to aid in understanding Luther’s own view of *communio*. In the ecumenical relationships between the LWF and Rome, the church fathers have been used as both precedent for how the office of bishop can serve the *koinonia* of the church in our present circumstances and as models for understanding how the apostolicity of the faith is the responsibility of both the bishop and the people.

The following exposition relates four periods of the LWF’s history and its search for unity (both within Lutheranism and ecumenically with other churches). In the first (1947-1967), the LWF was able to stress the need for elements of visible unity centered on Word and sacraments which would hopefully lead to pulpit and altar fellowship among Lutherans. Background studies for this early period made use of and examined the church fathers on *koinonia* when they investigated Lutheran understandings of church unity. In the second period (1968-1979), there was little critical reflection on the nature and unity of the church. Instead, the LWF was taken with some of the practical implications of their earlier views, especially as they impacted the situation of the Lutheran churches in South Africa, the black and white churches of which were certainly not exhibiting any real sense of unity under apartheid. In the third period (1980-1990), the LWF was forced to deal with the theological aftermath of the ecclesiological
environment in South Africa, where the LWF’s decision had been to find serious fault with the white Lutheran churches, citing that they were simply not living according to the gospel by denying pulpit and altar fellowship with the black churches. This led to the LWF devoting time and resources to reflecting on what communio might mean for Lutherans. The result was an LWF assembly in 1990 that changed the LWF constitution to read that it is now a communion of churches. During this third period one internal Lutheran study and two ecumenical dialogues made use of the church fathers in helping shape a Lutheran understanding of what a communion of churches can be. The last period extends from the 1990 assembly to the present. During this time, the LWF commissioned an extensive study of the church as communion, which produced a statement and a considerable set of essays. In many places both the statement and the essays use the church fathers. These stages in the LWF’s history show how the LWF has been involved in theological reflection on communion ecclesiology and has made use of the church fathers while doing so.

The early history of the LWF spans 1947-1967. In this time, as Michael Root notes, the ecclesiological work of the LWF did not directly address intra-Lutheran unity or the very nature of the LWF itself. It did, however, reveal the need for Lutherans to insist on points of visible unity among Lutherans based on Word and sacrament. This ecclesiological work was an advance for world Lutheranism from the days of the World Lutheran Convention meetings of earlier decades which only emphasized confessionalism and catechetical issues.

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During this early period of the LWF, there were important studies which took on the central issue of church unity, ones which also made use of the church fathers. First, between 1954 and 1956 the Commissions on Theology and Liturgy of the LWF studied the unity of the church and the theology of worship. Lectures from this Commission were collected in a volume titled *The Unity of the Church*.\(^\text{232}\) In the opening essay, Conrad Bergendoff reminds the reader that disunity in the church has been a concern since the very earliest period. He notes, “nothing in the history of the church leads us to believe that there ever was a period of complete unity.”\(^\text{233}\) Specifically, he points out that groups like the Montanists and Donatists may not have been as out of order as many subsequent generations of Christians were led to believe. In his essay “The Nature and Goal of Church Unity,” T. A. Kantonen refers to the fathers at the Council of Nicaea to stress the point that at the center of unity of the confession of the church is joint and agreed understanding of who Christ is.\(^\text{234}\) Here Lutherans are using the early church as evidence that church (dis)unity has been a concern from earliest time and that commonly held confession of faith is a key element for unity.

Additionally, Anders Nygren writes that in answering the question, where is the one church of Christ, Cyprian replied that it is where the bishop is. While Nygren does not cite a specific text of Cyprian at this point, a couple of possibilities are that he is referring to his *De Unitate* 17 or Letter 66. The first states, “Does a man think he is with Christ when he acts in opposition to the bishops of Christ, when he cuts himself off from

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\(^{233}\) Conrad Bergendoff, “Our Oneness in Christ and Our Disunity as Churches,” in *The Unity of the Church*, 3-9, at 6.

the society of His clergy and people?" 235 The second claims, “… you ought to know that
the bishop is in the Church and the Church is in the bishop and, if there is anyone who is
not with the bishop, he is not in the Church.” 236 After Nygren makes this reference to
Cyprian, he then goes on to say, “on this the Roman Church has built further.” 237
Following this he claims that the Reformation answer is that the one church is where
Christ is (through Word and sacrament), in Nygren’s estimation a deeper – and somehow
other – understanding. However, he does not investigate whether this may be something
Cyprian himself may have been intending with his comment on the office of bishop. So
Nygren uses the fathers as quasi-proof texts in distinguishing Lutherans from Roman
Catholics.

Two other studies were seminal to Lutheran understanding of the communio of
the church during this first era of LWF history. The first was Peter Brunner’s 1963 essay
“Koinonia: The Basis and Forms of Church Fellowship.” 238 In this essay Brunner
focused on how individual believers are incorporated into the koinonia of the local
congregation, in particular through the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper.
Brunner’s work reflected Michael Root’s assessment from above: that the Lutheran
ecclesiology of this era did not strike at a grand vision of Lutheran communion, but it did
emphasize the importance of visible and tangible elements of unity. Brunner’s essay was
largely based on Scriptural and Confessional sources, with no reference to the church

235 De Unitate 17, from Cyprian: De Lapsis and De Ecclesiae Catholicae Unitate, trans. Maurice Bévenot
University of America Press, 1964), 229.
238 Peter Brunner, “Koinonia: The Basis and Forms of Church Fellowship,” Lutheran World 10:3 (April,
fathers. However, it was an important piece of work in shaping Lutheran thought on the church as communion.

The second seminal work was Werner Elert’s *Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries*.\(^{239}\) It is beyond the scope of the present study to examine Elert’s work in any detail. We can, however, gain a sense of what this work accomplished by looking at the main topics Elert engaged. Elert spent most of his attention on the *koinonia* of the local congregation – not a surprise for a Lutheran theologian. Consequently, he examined topics such as “the sacrament as fellowship,” “unity and fellowship,” “church fellowship in the local church [in Elert’s mind, a congregation],” “church discipline and the Lord’s Supper,” and “the local congregation and the heretics.”\(^{240}\) Beyond this, Elert looked into the ways *koinonia* took shape across and between local congregations with considerations of “fellowship between churches,” “fellowship by letter,” “altar fellowship between churches,” and “keeping altar fellowship intact.”\(^{241}\) Elert intended his work to be an examination of church fellowship based on the Eucharist from the “purely” missional time of Paul to the more institutionalized era of the later patristic period.\(^{242}\) But even there are some Lutheran tendencies in his treatment of the sources: laying priority for understanding the structure of the church in the New Testament era, while being leery of the institutionalization of later centuries. Nevertheless, his study stands as a deep investigation into a patristic understanding of the

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\(^{239}\) Werner Elert, *Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries*, trans. N. E. Nagel (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1966 [German original, 1954]).

\(^{240}\) Each of these phrases is a chapter title in the book.

\(^{241}\) Again, these are chapter titles.

\(^{242}\) Elert, *Eucharist and Church Fellowship*, viii.
church as communion based on the sacrament of the Eucharist, albeit from a Lutheran orientation and for Lutheran purposes.

The second major era of the LWF’s history spans 1968-1979. The stress of the first era was on the visible elements of church unity for Lutherans, namely agreement on and recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship, which is the phrase that explains how Lutherans from different churches fully recognize each other’s ministries and clergy to the point that a clergy person from one Lutheran church can freely serve within another Lutheran church. In this second era the LWF took this seriously and acted on the consequences of this position. The decisions of two LWF assemblies are important during these years. In 1970, the Evian (France) Assembly passed a resolution which dealt with two main issues regarding the situation of the churches in South Africa: the relations between white and black churches and what churches should do in facing apartheid. The black churches in South Africa were not content simply with a merely formal altar and pulpit fellowship. They wanted white and black churches to live a common life together, and the white churches were not willing to engage in such a life because they were adhering to apartheid. In pushing for this common life, the black churches threw into stark relief what other Lutheran churches meant by the unity borne in church fellowship.

The LWF’s next assembly was in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) in 1977. This assembly’s official statement “Southern Africa: Confessional Integrity” averred that the common confessional basis of the LWF rested on the fellowship churches find at the altar, from the pulpit, and from beyond. That is, the common life of the church is more than just altar and pulpit fellowship. This LWF statement went further to say that the
white South African churches which were not rejecting apartheid were denying the gospel. Thus, those churches were not living in fellowship with other churches; their decisions and (non)actions had kept them from fellowship. The statement was not authoritative or binding in any juridical way, but it was a watershed document in that, as Michael Root states, “most unambiguously, the LWF was now assuming that it was in fact an association of churches who shared a common confession in word and deed, from which fellowship should follow.” Thus the statement from the LWF’s 1970 Evian assembly was authoritative in the sense that it gave witness to the place where Lutherans had come in growing in fellowship and communion.

The second era of the LWF’s history was marked by little ecclesiological self-reflection or intentional theological study of the church. In the era following, however, the LWF picked these up again. In 1979, the executive committee of the LWF met to discuss the relationship between the LWF and the WCC, which prompted a good deal of deliberation on the subject of the nature of the LWF. By 1990, the LWF was ready to proclaim, as it did at the Curitiba (Brazil) Assembly, that it is a communion of churches, but a communion of churches of a specific kind, which is to say, of churches that hailed from a set of northern European countries and was carried by immigrants of those countries to numerous places around the world and have since found ways to increase a show of ecclesial unity given their common Lutheran heritage. The situation of the white and black churches in South Africa had forced the LWF to ponder what it had done at Dar es Salaam and what implications may come from that decision.

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Between 1979 and 1990, this pondering led not to an answer to the question of the ecclesial nature of the LWF itself, but rather to a view of the LWF as a communion of churches that, as Root describes, “understood themselves as mutually committed in a way that permitted the exercise of a kind of church discipline.” This discipline was an addition to the identity of the LWF; that it could exercise judgments based on the actions of member churches was new and changed the self-perception of what the LWF was and what its responsibilities and powers were. While there were, and still are, a number of questions regarding the character and implications of this view of the LWF as communion, the general point is that the LWF perceived itself as a communion of churches by virtue of its common recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship and common witness to a life lived together. What is not stressed is any particular structure of communion, which would almost inevitably raise the question of whether or not the LWF is some kind of super-church. Two statements from the 1984 LWF assembly in Budapest formed the theological basis for the Curitiba constitution: “The Unity We Seek” and “The Self-Understanding and Task of the Lutheran World Federation.”

During this period, there were at least three important instances of the LWF engaging in ecclesiological reflection and making use of the church fathers. One case was the 1988 LWF study by Eugene L. Brand, entitled Toward a Lutheran Communion:

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244 Michael Root, “Affirming the Communion,” 239.
245 This is not to say that Lutherans have not, and do not fear that such may be implied in this understanding of the LWF as communion.
Pulpit and Altar Fellowship. The other two were LWF-Roman Catholic ecumenical dialogues: the 1978 Eucharist and the 1984 Facing Unity.

Brand’s study does not refer to any church father specifically, but rather to more general episodes and ecclesiological issues from the patristic era, and that based exclusively on the work of Werner Elert we introduced above. Brand rehearses instances of altar (and by extension pulpit) fellowship from the patristic era in order to demonstrate a number of points, among them are, “confessional fellowship (i.e. unity in faith) as fundamental to church fellowship and altar fellowship,” “how the relationship developed structurally between the local/regional and universal senses of communio,” and “that altar fellowship issues did not have their origin in the 16th century Reformation.” While Brand does not cite particular fathers, we can infer that the point about confessional unity may have been informed by Irenaeus who laid stress on the church’s unity resting on the unity of faith taught and believed; likewise, his point about structural development may have been informed by Cyprian who argued for a collegial view of the episcopacy. In any case, Brand uses the church fathers as precedent from the earliest time of the church

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248 The Eucharist: The Final Report of the Joint Roman Catholic-Lutheran Commission, 1978 from Growth in Agreement [Faith and Order Paper 108], ed. Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer (Paulist Press: New York, 1984) 190-214; and Facing Unity, from Growth in Agreement II [Faith and Order Paper 187], ed. Jeffry Gros, Harding Meyer, and William G. Rusch (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) 443-484. The list of endnotes to The Eucharist is inaccurate in GiA; the proper listing can be found at <http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/l-rec/doc/e1-rec_eucharist.html>, accessed on May 10, 2011. It is important to note that both The Eucharist and The Ministry in the Church were written in order to respond to inadequately addressed issues arising from the very first international Lutheran-Roman Catholic bilateral dialogue, the 1972 Malta Report, The Gospel and the Church. Another important international Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue is the 1993 document Church and Justification. I do not bring it into this conversation because I spend some time on it and its use of the church fathers in a later chapter.

249 Brand, Toward a Lutheran Communion, 19.
for how to understand the proper kind of fellowship Lutherans should seek among themselves, and also with other churches.

Although we are still examining the third era of the LWF’s history, I should alert the reader to the fact that we have so far only been reviewing intra-Lutheran studies. In this third period, the LWF partook in two significant ecumenical dialogues with the Roman Catholic Church, on the Eucharist and on church unity. Here I will fill out this third period with a discussion of these two rounds and specifically where communion ecclesiology appears and how the church fathers are used.

The Lutheran-Catholic statement *The Eucharist* was the result of a bilateral dialogue at the highest level and made use of the work of more regional or national Lutheran-Catholic dialogues. In it the church fathers are used twice, both times when the subject of the church is discussed overtly; however, only the first use of the fathers directly relates to a Lutheran understanding of communion ecclesiology. In this first instance Leo the Great is cited in a discussion of the connection between the Eucharist and the church, which is described as “a living bond.”

According to the bilateral dialogue, the sacramental communion believers have with Christ through the Eucharist gives rise to the ecclesial communion they experience. The fathers are used as sources for understanding this point. The dialogue cites Leo the Great’s Sermon 63.7, which reads, “Nought else follows the partaking in the body and blood of Christ than that we become what we receive.” This is a very apt sermon for this point in the dialogue because Leo wrote on the Passion, wherein he speaks about the unity of Christ as head

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251 Quoted from *The Eucharist* §25, *GiA*, 198.
with the believers as members of a body, the effect of the Passion realized daily by believers (especially in baptism), and the need for the believer to be fed by a sober eucharistic meal akin to the Passover meal. In this way, the believers become Christ’s body by receiving Christ himself. Interestingly, The Eucharist places a quotation from a sermon by Luther just after this patristic sermon, one which asserts the same thought as Leo. It does not appear to be that the quotations are meant to be equal representation from the Catholic and Lutheran positions but to be lucid expressions of the theological point that the communion believers have with Christ through the Eucharist brings about the believers’ ecclesial communion.  

The next international Lutheran-Catholic bilateral dialogue document for our consideration is the 1984 Facing Unity, a dialogue that offers an ecumenical road map for the future of the Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches and their goal of fellowship in common ministry. Facing Unity begins by claiming that the church is “a communion (communio) subsisting in a network of local churches.” Very often, Facing Unity uses the term ‘fellowship’ to describe this communion. Facing Unity describes three areas for fellowship between the two churches: fellowship of faith, fellowship in sacraments, and

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252 In the second instance where a church father is used in The Eucharist, it is Ignatius of Antioch and in the context of a discussion on the Eucharist and ministry. In this case, as distinguished from the use of Leo above, the dialogue is referring to Ignatius as an illustration of a particular Church’s teaching, i.e., the Roman Catholic Church’s. Ignatius’ Letter to the Smyrnaeans 8.1 is quoted immediately following a quotation from Lumen Gentium which claims that the bishop is responsible for regulating eucharistic celebrations in correspondence with the Lord’s commands, and the Roman Catholic Church’s laws – the quoted text is from Lumen Gentium 26. Smyrnaeans 8.1 reads, “Only those Eucharists are lawful which are performed by the bishop or a person charged by him” (from The Eucharist §66). Lutherans agree that it is a main responsibility of the ordained office – though not necessarily the bishop – to administer the sacraments rightly, but The Eucharist does not cite any church fathers in defense of the Lutheran view.  

253 Facing Unity §5, GiA II, 445. The use of the English phrase “subsisting in” does not appear to be a direct reference to LG 8 and its use of subsistit in to describe how the true church subsists within the Roman Catholic Church. However, Facing Unity 5 does quote at some length from LG 26, which addresses the relationship of local churches to one another and to the universal church specifically through their ordained clergy.
fellowship in service. There may be some danger in attempting to extract a Lutheran view of communion ecclesiology from a bilateral dialogue, but I think it is possible to highlight aspects of communion ecclesiology that are particularly palatable from a Lutheran point of view or, to say it another way, to take note of various Lutheran stresses on communion ecclesiology in *Facing Unity*.

In the third of the above areas, fellowship in service, *Facing Unity* gives considerable time to the early church and the church fathers. Indeed, the first two points in this section on the community of service (which highlight the commitment by both churches to a structured fellowship and the hope for a common ordained ministry between them) are followed by two points on the early church: a joint reflection on the early church and the significance of this reflection for church fellowship between Lutherans and Catholics.

*Facing Unity* makes the claim that the early church understood the episcopal office to be in service of the *koinonia* of the church. The Reformers of the sixteenth century stressed the role of the episcopal office as one in service to the church (though they were not explicitly using *communio* terminology). In doing so, as *Facing Unity* states, “the Lutheran Reformation basically affirmed the episcopal office of the early church.” Here Lutherans emphasize the role of the bishop as representative of and servant to the congregation.

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254 These are not achieved sequentially; rather, “the concretization of church fellowship … constitutes an integral process in which each of these three elements achieves full realization only together with the others.” This integral process involves mutual recognition and reception.

255 This is done as foundational work for a proposal offered in *Facing Unity* for how Lutherans and Catholics might achieve a common ordained ministry. We cannot comment on all the aspects of this proposal, nor how plausible it may actually be.

Facing Unity highlights this patristic understanding of the episcopal office in service to the koinonia of the church by examining the ordination practices for bishops in the early church. Here the church fathers are used as precedent for contemporary understanding and practice for how the office of bishop can be in service to the koinonia of the church, a precedent which the dialogue noted for its contemporary significance. Facing Unity offers a reflection for how this can be of use to Lutherans and Catholics. The examination of patristic ordination practices yields some important aspects, ones that the dialogue calls, “significant for use today.” For example, the bishop is to be a member of a local communion. Also, the members of the church are a part of the process by electing the bishop and receiving him as the one given oversight. Finally, the selection of a bishop is consecrated through the representation of the neighboring churches through the laying on of hands by other bishops.

Facing Unity summarizes these ordination practices to say that episcopal ordination is charismatic, liturgical, and ecclesial and that the apostolicity of faith is the responsibility of both the bishop and the people as a whole. The charismatic, liturgical, and ecclesial elements of episcopal ordination reveal that any bishop begins as a baptized member of a local koinonia, and as such (once ordained bishop) is placed directly in service to that koinonia. Facing Unity cites Augustine’s Sermon 340 to substantiate these points. The quoted lines read, “For you I am a bishop, with you, after all, I am a Christian. The first is the name of an office undertaken, the second a name of grace.”

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257 Facing Unity §107, Gia II, 468.
The apostolicity of faith as the responsibility of both the bishop and the people is illustrated as *Facing Unity* notes how the congregation is responsible for more than just the bishop’s ordination. A church father is here used as a model for how this can be the case. Quoting Augustine again, *Facing Unity* points out how the congregation can be over and against the bishop, “that one must deny one’s consent even to bishops when it happens that they err and speak in a manner that contradicts the canonical texts.”

This quotation is from Augustine’s *De Unitate Ecclesiae*, through which the bishop of Hippo addresses his fellow Catholic bishops so that they might know how to argue against the Donatist bishops during the early fifth century. The main question Augustine raises in this text, the answer to which differentiates the Catholics from the Donatists, is “where is the Church?” Augustine’s answer, of course, is that it is in the Catholic Church, but it is the basis of authority for making such a determination that is most important: the Scriptures. It is not the bishops, either Catholic or Donatist, who confirm where the church is; it is the Scriptures. Bishops can be in error. The Bible cannot.

ordination as bishop, one in which he stresses the mutual and symbiotic relationship between himself as bishop and the people. The specific date of this sermon is unknown, but apparently it is one far enough along his time as bishop that he can view his office of bishop as “one in which he stresses the mutual and symbiotic relationship between himself as bishop and the people. The specific date of this sermon is unknown, but apparently it is one far enough along his time as bishop that he can view his office of bishop as “one [meaning] danger” while his name as Christian is one which means “salvation.”

259 *Facing Unity* §110, GiA II, 468.

260 Thus, Augustine takes the majority of his *De Unitate* to exposit Scripture in order to argue that the Church was where the Catholic Church was and not merely where the Donatist Church was. The point about the ability of bishops to be in error is more fully clear when the larger context of the quoted line from *Facing Unity* is taken into consideration: ‘See how what he says is clear and plain. How will one who hears it and does not follow dare to call himself his sheep? No one should say to me: “Oh, what did Donatus say? Oh, what did Parmenian or Pontius or whoever of theirs say?” [variously named Donatist bishops] because we do not assent to what the Catholic bishops anywhere say in case they are deceived so as to think anything contrary to God’s canonical scriptures. But if they fall into error in guarding the bond of unity and charity, let what the Apostle says prevail among them: But if someone knows something else, God will reveal it to you. (Phil. 3:15) Now surely these divine words about the universal Church are so straightforward that no one but heretics with their proud wickedness and blind rage could rant against them” (Augustine, *Letter to the Catholics* 28, trans. by Maureen A. Tilley, unpublished ms, 34-5).
This reflection on views in the early church on the role and responsibility of the bishop is significant for the church fellowship between Lutherans and Catholics. The office of bishop in the early church served the (*koinonia*) of the church in three ways: personally, collegially, and in cooperation with the congregation. The bishop serves personally; that is, in more than a merely administrative or functional manner. The bishop likewise serves collegially; that is, the bishop serves the local church but is also a bishop alongside all other bishops and is, with them, responsible for the whole church. Lastly, the bishop serves in cooperation with the congregation. *Facing Unity* claims this is done, “inasmuch as the bishop’s ministry, even though it is not exercised in the name of the people, is generally exercised in fellowship with the people and respects the diversity of the ministries and charisma given by the Spirit.”

As a theological source for understanding this last point, *Facing Unity* cites from Cyprian’s letters. First, in Letter 14.4, the Carthaginian father writes, “From the beginning of my episcopate, I decided to do nothing of my own opinion privately without your advice and the consent of the people.”

Second, in Letter 34.4, he proclaims, “I think that I alone ought not to give a decision in this matter … since this examination of each one must be discussed and investigated more fully not only with my colleagues, but with the whole people themselves.” Both of these letters were written during the height of the Decian persecution (A.D. 250) when Cyprian was in exile and leading his charge through numerous epistles. Both of these letters reflect how he was concerned for the unity of the

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263 Cyprian, *Letters 1-81*, 89.
church, not wanting to make unilateral decisions on his own but involving as many elements of the church as possible.

As mentioned above, the result of the period from 1979-1990 is that at the Curitiba Assembly the LWF changed its constitution to state that the LWF was no longer simply a “free association of Lutheran churches” as it had been since its first constitution in 1947. From 1990 on, the LWF was (and is) “a communion of churches which confess the triune God, agree in the proclamation of the Word of God and are united in pulpit and altar fellowship.”

Following this declaration, the constitution emphasizes that the LWF is mainly and especially intent on serving Christian unity through ecumenical work, service to those in need (humanitarian, social, economic), and cooperation among LWF member churches.

This brings us to the fourth phase of the history of the LWF, which runs from 1990 to the present. The key issue here is the reflection of the LWF on what it actually means by being a communion. In 1993 the LWF Council requested that a study be done, one that would address many of the questions arising from the Curitiba constitution. The result was the 1997 *The Church as Communion*. In this collection, a Working Group on Ecclesiology contributes a statement, “Toward a Lutheran Understanding of Communion” which is then followed by commentary and a substantial collection of essays. *The Church as Communion* serves as an intra-Lutheran examination of communion ecclesiology.

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264 *From Federation to Communion*, 530. As mentioned above, the 1984 Budapest assembly of the LWF made two statements that were theologically foundational for the Curitiba constitution: “The Unity We Seek” and “The Self-Understanding and Task of the Lutheran World Federation.”

The statement “Toward a Lutheran Understanding of Communion” takes for its starting point the creedal phrase, “the communion of saints.” From there it takes up the foundation of communion (the relationship of the triune God to the church), the forms of communion (in which communion is made known in the world), the mission of the communion (how the church is of service in and to the world), the unity of communion (in what ways Lutheran churches can express unity more fully among themselves as well as ecumenically with other churches), and the relationship between the communion and all of humanity. The statement explains that Lutherans have recently been reflecting on how the concept of koinonia or communio has brought about links between the current Lutheran churches and “the Early Church.” The reference, however, is vague and general; is it the Early Church of the New Testament or of the patristic era, or both? A more descriptive reference comes in the section on the communion of the church in the Holy Spirit as mission. Here the statement notes that “the Creeds of the Early Church” summarize “the public confession of the apostolic faith.”

As would be expected, as the essays in The Church as Communion focus on a variety of issues surrounding Lutheran understandings of communion ecclesiology they make use largely of Lutheran sources. The papers move from an initial study of koinonia in the New Testament directly to Luther himself and the Reformation movement more generally, then on to the more contemporary late twentieth-century situation. In this last area the papers examine two main emphases: ecumenicity and moral decision-making.

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266 The Church as Communion, 13.
267 The Church as Communion, 23.
The church fathers arise in two ways in these essays. First, three authors (Ingun Montgomery, Christoph Schwöbel, and Risto Saarinen) use them as sources for clearer understanding Luther’s own work on the church as communion. Second, another writer (Daniel Martensen) uses a church father as a model of a theological perspective in order to comment on the recent situation of the Evangelical Lutheran in America.

In his essay, “The Understanding of the Church in the Sixteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” Ingun Montgomery argues that Lutheran ecclesiology has moved from a sense of *communio* in the Reformation period to a sense of the church being more important to the individual by the time of the early twentieth century. In claiming that Lutherans, by the mid and late twentieth century, have rightly recovered the former sense, Montgomery further argues that Lutherans should be wary to avoid excessive dependence on secularization and pluralism in formulating a contemporary understanding of communion ecclesiology and instead adhere to a *communio* based on Christ and the church’s theology. Montgomery describes what Luther gleaned from Augustine’s ecclesiology when Luther was working on his own: an understanding of the true church as spiritual, found in Augustine’s *City of God*. Luther also adheres to the Augustinian idea that the church public and visible to the world is a mixture of the good and the wicked.

Montgomery does not actually cite any specific passage from Augustine, either from the *City of God* or any other work. It seems plausible, however, to speculate on a couple of possibilities. In the *City of God* 20, Augustine writes on how God will judge

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268 Ingun Montgomery, “The Understanding of the Church in the Sixteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” in *The Church as Communion*, 163-83.
between the city of God and the city of this world, including the judgment of each person and whether they are truly a part of the former, i.e. the spiritual city. Second, we can speculate that the reference to the visible church being a mixture of the good and the wicked comes from Augustine’s *De Unitate*, in which Augustine argues against the Donatists’ tenet that the church can only be made up of the pure.  

Montgomery makes reference to these ideas from Augustine so that he can better articulate Luther’s own views on ecclesial communion: namely that the spiritual and temporal realms should be kept separate so the church may attend to the former and the secular authorities the latter; and that no one pretend to know who – within the church – actually rises to the level of the spiritual.

Both Christoph Schwöbel and Risto Saarinen refer to church fathers in explaining how Luther’s trinitarian theology retains emphases of both an Augustinian understanding of the divine essence and a Cappadocian understanding of the particularity of the trinitarian persons. For Schwöbel, Luther can accomplish this because he accords the doctrinal traditions of the church secondary authority, an authority derived from the primary authority of Scripture. Schwöbel contends that Luther incorporates the Holy Spirit more extensively into the act of justification (and thus into the act of being brought into communion with God) than the Augustinian tradition typically had. Thus the communion of the church with God rests in large part on the role of the Holy Spirit, a role that consists of making the self-communication of God (which exists in the Trinity) available to the church (and thereby the world).

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269 In particular, *De Unitate* 34 and 35 stress this point against the Donatist position.  
In a similar manner, Saarinen argues that Luther’s trinitarian theology held the Western and Eastern emphases together, especially when it comes to talking about the intertrinitarian life. Saarinen, however, notes a difficulty not addressed by Schwöbel: that the trouble comes in making connections between the intertrinitarian life and the ecclesial life and structure. Since the Western orientation from the time of Cyprian and Augustine was on the unity of the Godhead, Saarinen writes, a corollary is that the church is thought of in hierarchical and monarchial terms, which serve to crystallize the unity of the church.\(^\text{271}\) Saarinen contrasts this with the Eastern approach when he writes, “Contrary to this alleged monism, many Orthodox theologians claim that a ‘Greek patristic synthesis’ is visible in the Cappadocian fathers. This synthesis differs dramatically from the Augustinian monism in that it emphasizes the role of divine persons as the fundamental starting-point.”\(^\text{272}\) Saarinen holds, however, that Luther’s ecclesiology based on the Eucharist was more akin to the Eastern trinitarian mold than the Western.

Daniel Martensen’s essay “Lutheran Identity and Communion in the Ecclesial Context of the United States of America” is the last for our consideration in this section.\(^\text{273}\) Martensen notes that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America’s constitution states that the ELCA is an expression of the fellowship of believers and congregations. However, the meaning of how this Lutheran fellowship is to take shape is in question because the kind of Christendom organized along Protestant lines in America from its colonization until the twentieth century is now no more. Many of the theological

\(^{271}\) Saarinen, “East-West Dialogues,” in Church as Communion, 323.
\(^{272}\) Saarinen, “East-West Dialogues,” in Church as Communion, 323.
perspectives that orient Lutherans are now in danger of deterioration because of a number of factors: seemingly effortless mobility of society, “the challenge of religious pluralism”, and – chief among these – “the demise of the influence of the Enlightenment,” the Enlightenment being what was instrumental in orchestrating the social philosophy of America.\(^{274}\)

In the face of these factors, Martensen refuses to be hopeless or baselessly cling to the vestiges of the Enlightenment. Instead, he opts for a creative response, one inspired by St. Vincent of Lerins. Martensen writes:

> Back in the fifth century Vincent of Lerins wrote down some thoughts about how the church might distinguish between heresy and truth. He said that ecumenicity, antiquity and consensus constituted the marks of the church. Clearly, these words do not mean now what they did fifteen centuries ago, but they offer an excellent point of departure. … The search for consensus about its identity, purpose and future now preoccupies the ELCA.\(^{275}\)

So, for Martensen, the fellowship or communion of the ELCA as that which exists between believers and congregations can be best recovered and formulated along the lines of what Vincent of Lerins maintains. The Latin phrase is *quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est*, and comes from his *Communitorium* 2.6. The phrase at first might seem helpful, but in the end the phrase’s meaning may be so broad that its helpfulness will amount not so much as an instruction as an inspiration.

In review, this section explored how the LWF has found itself on a trajectory towards an ecclesiology of communion. The four eras of LWF history traced above have shown how this trajectory began with the desire for the Lutheran churches of the LWF to express their unity through pulpit and altar fellowship. Research into what this pulpit and

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\(^{274}\) Martensen, “Lutheran Identity,” in *Church as Communion*, 382-6.

\(^{275}\) Martensen, “Lutheran Identity,” in *Church as Communion*, 386.
altar fellowship looked like in the New Testament and patristic periods informed the LWF. The LWF did not consider the church fathers as much in making internal decisions or discernments about the fellowship or communion of the LWF itself as when the LWF was in ecumenical dialogue with other churches. Nevertheless, following the 1990 Assembly and the formal change of the LWF constitution to claim that the LWF is in fact a communion of churches, more recent self-examination has engaged the church fathers as sources for understanding Luther’s own ecclesiology and as model for how the ELCA can make sense of its current circumstances.

Summary

After this survey, we can see how each of these four major traditions of Christianity have developed various senses of communion ecclesiology and how they have interacted with and influenced one another. The Orthodox have contributed by making strong connections between the life of the Trinity and the life of the church, while basing such on the work of the Greek fathers. The largely Protestant World Council of Churches showed in its early life a tendency toward aspects of communion ecclesiology, and recently has endorsed a full understanding of it. The basis for such thinking in the WCC has come from the involvement of the Orthodox churches as well as some work done by Anglican and Lutheran churches. The Roman Catholic Church has also grown in its understanding of communion ecclesiology, culminating in the work of both particular theologians and Vatican II. Much of the Catholic understanding of communion ecclesiology is inspired by if not based in the church fathers. Lastly, the Lutheran World Federation has redefined itself as a communio of churches, and while it has not done so
in explicit conversation with patristic ecclesiologies, it has certainly been in contact with them.

Finally, there was a wide array of uses of the fathers within and among these groups. Many of these churches and traditions used the fathers as source for understanding, precedent or model for current day belief or practice, or as a defense of a position. Along the way the various versions of communion ecclesiology have been based on these uses of the fathers, but those same versions of communion ecclesiology have opened ecumenical conversations and relationships that have then in turn allowed the church fathers to be used in ways that help the ecumenical parties to work toward better understanding of one another and toward ecumenical rapprochement. In the next chapter we will examine four representative theologians, one for each of the broader contexts we have already begun to look at in this chapter. This will afford us a chance to explore in more depth and detail, though limited in scope since only representative, these particular ecclesiologies of communion and their uses of the fathers.
CHAPTER 4

COMMUNION ECCLESIOLOGY AND *RESSOURCEMENT*, PART 2

REPRESENTATIVE THEOLOGIANS OF COMMUNION ECCLESIOLOGY

*Introduction*

In the last chapter we examined the relationship between communion ecclesiology and *ressourcement* in four contexts: Eastern Orthodoxy, the WCC, Roman Catholicism, and Lutheranism (here I am using the term *ressourcement* and ‘use of the church fathers’ essentially interchangeably). We saw how each of these made use of the church fathers in formulating versions of communion ecclesiology. Additionally, we saw how communion ecclesiology creates an ecumenical framework in which those same church fathers can be used in different ways: both to explain and defend ecclesial positions as well as forge ecumenical perspectives that can bring churches to convergence, consensus, or agreement.

Hence, in this chapter I do a number of things. First, I briefly explore what communion ecclesiology is. This is admittedly ambitious, but a necessary discussion. In this section I will explore four representative theologians from four traditions who have all worked on communion ecclesiology: the Orthodox, John Zizioulas; the Free Church, Miroslav Volf; the Roman Catholic, Jean-Marie Tillard; and the Lutheran, Wolfhart Pannenberg. As a way to help frame this discussion I will make use of a typology from
John Erickson which shows the tendency of Orthodox, Protestant, and Catholic to draw upon particular church fathers when doing ecclesiology. Erickson does not specify either Free Church or Lutheran versions of Protestantism, but a critique will be given below.

As mentioned at the beginning of the last chapter, I will not be able to give as detailed and precise an examination of the uses of the fathers in this chapter as is done in the chapters on the sixteenth century or the U.S. L/RC dialogue. However, I will again employ the same kind of terminology as we have seen, that the fathers can be used, for example, as source for understanding or as precedent or model for current day belief or practice. Moreover, in this chapter, I will show how each of these theologians uses the church fathers in their understandings of communion ecclesiology both to be critical of their churches and to defend their churches. Each of these theologians is ecumenically-minded and is concerned to offer their theologies for such dual purpose.

This leads to the second point for this chapter, an in-depth comparison of the relationship between communion ecclesiology and ressourcement for Catholics and Lutherans. Since the main focus of the present work is to examine the U.S. Lutheran-Catholic dialogue, I will revisit two representative theologians from the Catholic and Lutheran churches (Jean-Marie Tillard and Wolfhart Pannenberg) and their respective versions of communion ecclesiology, with particular attention to their references to the fathers. The church, for the majority of its existence, has not seen the need to reflect upon itself as a specific theological topic. Not until the pre- and early Reformation eras did such a locus come to be. The efforts placed here are akin to the efforts placed in

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276 Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen writes in his An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical and Global Perspectives (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2002): “It might come as a surprise to many students of theology that ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church, did not gain its own established standing in
ecumenism. While ecclesiology was not a theological locus in the early church, there is a wealth of material from the early church to help theologians do their theologizing about the church; so too for ecumenists.

Even though I will end up focusing on the Lutheran and Catholic theologians in this chapter, I include the examinations of the Orthodox Zizioulas and the Free Church Volf to show how ecumenically pervasive communion ecclesiology has become. Additionally, including these two theologians demonstrates how such different theologians from different churches and traditions all marshal the church fathers in doing their ecclesiologies. This examination also helps to place the Lutheran and Catholic theologians on a larger stage, one that fills out the more complex and nuanced setting for communion ecclesiology in general and specific versions in particular.

*What is Communion Ecclesiology?*

In his quintessentially perspicacious manner, Lutheran theologian Robert Jenson offers the following observation of communion ecclesiology; namely that it has two parts. Jenson writes, “One is the doctrine of the church’s ontological foundation … The other part … is a doctrine of the church’s structure.” Indeed, Jenson seems to think the first part the more important since he spends twice as much time on it in his essay “The
Church as *Communio*” than on the second. In this section, I will use Jenson’s observation to organize some introductory remarks about communion ecclesiology.

The ontological foundation for the church is God. An ontological foundation is that in which something has the basis for its very being. The basis for the very existence of the church, then, is God. So, when we speak of communion ecclesiology, we are first and foremost speaking theologically about the church and thereby we are first and foremost speaking theologically about the God who has brought the church into being. Only by understanding that God is who has created this church can the church discern what expression the church might have.

Therefore, both the “communion” and the “ecclesiology” of communion ecclesiology need to find their basis in the God of the church’s faith. The “ecclesiology” part has had many such expositions: church as kingdom of God, as people of God, as Body of Christ, etc. The “communion” part has had such as well, usually regarding the Trinity (a theological subject receiving renewed attention, in the West at least, in the past two centuries). Yet the two together is what constitutes a renewed understanding of the church. As Lorelei Fuchs expresses it, “*Koinonia* ecclesiology is a theology not of the Church *per se*. *Koinonia* ecclesiology is a theology of the God of the Church, a God who relates as Father, Son and Spirit.”

Arguably, the expositions of “ecclesiology” mentioned above are *aspects* of the Church; they do not express an encompassing description. Communion ecclesiology, however, attempts to give such a description. As a way into the depth and breadth of the

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vision of communion ecclesiology, I will very briefly sketch four views, each characteristic of their tradition’s perspective. The first will be from John Zizioulas (Eastern Orthodox), the second from Miroslav Volf (Free Church), the third from Jean-Marie Tillard (Roman Catholic), and the fourth from Wolfhart Pannenberg (Lutheran).

The distinction by Jenson given above regarding the ontological and structural aspects of the church are helpful conceptually. When examining a particular ecclesiology such as communion ecclesiology, however, the two are largely inseparable. Various understandings of the ontological bases for the life of the church have the church’s structures taking different shapes. So, when we look at these four representative theologians and their understandings of the church’s ontological basis and commensurate structure, we need to keep this in mind.

To help further organize and frame this discussion, I will avail myself of a typology from the Orthodox theologian John Erickson. Erickson does not deal with communion ecclesiology in and of itself. And his work does not address the ontological basis for the church. Instead, Erickson’s ecumenical work investigates, in broad fashion, how Orthodox, Protestants, and Catholics have made use of three patristic images of episkopé (by this term, ecumenists mean the practice and office of oversight in the church): that of Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus of Lyons, and Cyprian of Carthage, respectively. Thus, Erickson associates the Ignatian view of the bishop as the one who primarily presides at the Eucharist with the Orthodox, the Irenaean view of the bishop as the one who teaches the apostolic faith with authority with Protestants, and the Cyprianic

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view of the bishop as a member of a collegial body who retains the unity of the church with the Catholics. For our purposes, it is appropriate to note that Erickson does not make any distinction between the kinds of Protestants under scrutiny in this present work, namely Free Church but especially Lutherans. Moreover, I will note some other critical comments about how Erickson’s typology might be altered and made more precise. Notwithstanding these critiques, Erickson’s typology does help to situate the work of the four representative theologians I examine in this section.

John Zizioulas – Orthodox

John Zizioulas is the most influential Orthodox theologian to address the issue of communion ecclesiology. His fullest exposition comes in his book Being as Communion, the title of which already highlights the focus of his study. On the typically Eastern view, the substance of God is precisely the relationship the persons of the Trinity have with one another, in fact that relationship generated by and grounded in the hypostasis of the Father. So, for Zizioulas, ontology and communion are the same. That is to say, for Zizioulas, the seminal issue in communion does not have to do with unity as some kind of other reality in addition to the relationships formed between persons of the Trinity or creatures of the world. Rather, the seminal issue is that the unity found in communion is found directly in the relationships so formed through the will and actions of the Father.

Regarding the Trinity, Zizioulas defends his reading of the Eastern tradition, especially the Cappadocians, on this point of communion:

Among the Greek Fathers true unity of God, the one God, and the ontological “principle” or “cause” of the being and life of God does not consist in the one substance of God but in the hypostasis, that is, the person of the Father. The one God is not the one substance but the Father, who is the “cause” both of the generation of the Son and of the procession of the Spirit. … If God exists, He exists because the Father exists, that is, He who out of love freely begets the Son and brings forth the Spirit. Thus God as person – as the hypostasis of the Father – makes the one divine substance to be that which it is: the one God. … Outside the Trinity there is no God, that is, no divine substance, because the ontological “principle” of God is the Father. The personal existence of God (the Father) constitutes His substance, makes it hypostases. The being of God is identified with the person.\textsuperscript{281}

In this way, Zizioulas explicates a view of the Trinity wherein the Father is the source of the life of the Son and Spirit, causing them to be truly and fully divine persons enjoying the fullness of the godhead. He does so by using “the Greek Fathers” as sources for understanding this theological point.

Zizioulas claims that the purpose of the church is to bring salvation to the world, and so the church exists to be the means of reconciliation between all things. For Zizioulas, salvation takes effect when the human being is rescued from individuality and brought to personhood.\textsuperscript{282} Because of sin, human beings are condemned to live as individuals, that is, as creatures who are limited in their abilities and opportunities for communion. Salvation comes when the powers of individuality are overcome and humans are able to be persons, that is, they are able to engage in full and meaningful communion with one another and with God. As Zizioulas writes, “The mystery of being a person lies in the fact that here otherness and communion are not in contradiction but coincide.”\textsuperscript{283} Individuality constitutes the contradiction, personhood the coincidence.

\textsuperscript{281} Zizioulas, Being as Communion, 40-1.
\textsuperscript{282} Zizioulas, Being as Communion, 49-65.
\textsuperscript{283} Zizioulas, Being as Communion, 106.
This salvation occurs through the Eucharist, wherein Christ (who was not an individual, but a person) has come to work this salvation. In the bread and wine, the person of Christ himself is made available through the work of the Spirit. According to Zizioulas, in Christ we see the person as:

a relational reality existing ‘for me’ or ‘for us.’ Here the Holy Spirit is not one who aids us in bridging the distance between Christ and ourselves, but he is the person of the Trinity who actually realizes in history that which we call Christ, this absolutely relational entity, our Savior. … Such is the great mystery of Christology, that the Christ-event is not an event defined by itself – it cannot be defined in itself for a single instant even theoretically – but is an integral part of the economy of the Holy Trinity. To speak of Christ means speaking at the same time of the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Thus, pneumatology and christology are related. Zizioulas uses a number of fathers as sources for understanding this point: Athanasius, Basil, and Cyril of Alexandria. Since Christ is a person, and not an individual, it is the Spirit that makes him available in the Eucharist for the gathered community. Hence, the communio believers receive from Christ himself is brought about by the work of the Spirit. The local Eucharist serves as the seminal person-creating event leading to salvation. As such, the bishop, who presides at each local Eucharist, is a centrally important figure.

For the role of the bishop, Zizioulas relies heavily on his reading of Ignatius of Antioch. The bishop, for Zizioulas, is primarily and essentially a person not in an office but in a relationship, albeit from a particular and fixed position arising from his ordination. In this relationship, the bishop represents the whole congregation, his personhood extended communally; likewise in this relationship, the bishop becomes like

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284 Zizioulas, Being as Communion, 107-122.
285 Zizioulas, Being as Communion, 110-11 (emphasis in original).
286 The specific texts from these fathers are Athanasius, Epistula ad Serapionem I.20; Basil, De Spiritu Sancto 19.49; and Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. John 10.
God. Again, here we see Zizioulas using the fathers as a source for understanding this theological position. On the first point, wherein the bishop’s personhood takes on new shape, Zizioulas cites Ignatius’ *Letter to the Trallians* 3.1 which lays out the three-fold order of ministry of deacon, presbyter, and bishop: “Similarly let everyone respect the deacons as Jesus Christ, as also the bishop who is a type of the Father, and the presbyters as the council of God and as the band of the apostles. Nothing can be called a church without these.”\(^{287}\) Zizioulas sees in this passage not simply an elucidation of the office of the bishop, but an encompassing web of relationships between the three orders of ministry and the laity, thus the entire church.\(^{288}\)

On the second point, that the bishop becomes like God, Zizioulas is depending on Ignatius’ notion of the bishop as a “type”, as one who (through his ordination) has been assigned “to a particular place in the community, and the ordained is defined after his ordination precisely by his ‘place’ in the community which in its eucharistic nature portrays the very Kingdom of God here and now.”\(^{289}\) For this, Zizioulas again cites *Trallians* 3.1, but also Ignatius’ *Letter to the Magnesians* 6.1 and 3.1-2. Ignatius portrays a schematic analogy in *Magnesians* 6.1, one by which he intended to instill unity in the church, “Be eager to do all thing in godly concord, with the bishop set over you in the place of God, and the presbyters in the place of the council of the apostles, and the deacons, most sweet to me, entrusted with the service of Jesus Christ, who before the ages was with the Father and appeared at the end.”\(^{290}\) In *Magnesians* 3.1-2, Ignatius refers to the bishop as having the place of God the Father, who is bishop over all, thus

\(^{288}\) Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 221.
\(^{289}\) Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 229.
\(^{290}\) *Ignatius of Antioch*, (Schoedel, 112).
reminding the Magnesians of the authority of the bishop. For Zizioulas, it is important to note, this authority is not inherent in the office but in the relationship that the bishop has with the other believers in the church.

The role of the bishop is not one simply of historical importance, but of “eschatological decisiveness.” Here Zizioulas depends on Ignatian typology coupled with the idea of “end” as goal from Maximus the Confessor, using both together as a source for understanding and explaining this importance of the bishop. As Maximus writes:

Thus the nave is the sanctuary in potency by being consecrated by the relationship of the sacrament towards its end, and in turn the sanctuary is the nave in act by possessing the principle of its own sacrament, which remains one and the same in its two parts. In this way the entire world of beings produced by God in creation is divided into a spiritual world filled with intelligible and incorporeal essences and into this sensible and bodily world which is ingeniously woven together of many forms and natures.

In order to understand Maximus more fully, it is important to recall that in the patristic period the nave and the sanctuary were specific parts of the church building. The nave was the main, central portion where the laity gathered for worship. The sanctuary was where the altar was placed and where the seats of the presbyters and bishop were – the laity were not allowed in the sanctuary. Often (especially in the East, where Maximus lived and wrote) the two were separated by a wall featuring icons. The celebration of the Eucharist took place in the sanctuary, presided over by the bishop, and then brought out to the laity in the nave. In the celebration of the Eucharist, the bishop serves as the representative of God who enacts an event that draws the creation (represented

291 Zizioulas, Being as Communion, 234.
symbolically by the nave and the laity) ever closer to its culmination as a new creation
(represented symbolically by the sanctuary and the bishop).

There is one area where Zizioulas uses the church fathers to be ecumenically
critical of his own tradition. Zizioulas uses the Cappadocian St. Basil as precedent for
how Orthodox theology can – indeed, really should, according to Zizioulas – make room
for some kind of expression of universal oversight of the church.\footnote{Zizioulas, Being as Communion, 132-42.} This is not done in
order to show the priority of the universal over the local, but as a corrective to the
Orthodox tendency to privilege the local over the universal. To be more precise, this is
done in order to demonstrate that “the nature of the eucharist points … [to] the
simultaneity of both local and universal.”\footnote{Zizioulas, Being as Communion, 133.} Zizioulas makes use of Basil’s \textit{On the Holy
Spirit} 18 and 68 as significant passages to show the precedent of a theological position
well within the Orthodox tradition that replaces “substance as an ontological category …
with that of κοινωνία.”\footnote{Zizioulas, Being as Communion, 134.} Basil was making this point for his discussion of the Trinity,
as for instance in \textit{On the Holy Spirit} 68 when he discusses the appropriate language to use
Seminary Press, 1980), 102-3.} Even though that
is the case, what Basil wrote can be, as Zizioulas claims, “applied to the relationship
between local and universal Church. There is one Church, as there is one God. But the
expression of this one Church is the communion of the many local Churches.

Communion and oneness coincide in ecclesiology.”\footnote{Zizioulas, Being as Communion, 134-5.}
Zizioulas stresses that this has institutional implications for Orthodoxy. If it really is the case that communion and oneness coincide in ecclesiology, then the Orthodox ought to be able to avoid the temptation of being content in regarding conciliarism as having the same purpose and importance as the pope. Thus, as Zizioulas argues:

The Orthodox view of the Church, in my understanding at least, requires an institution which expresses the oneness of the Church and not simply its multiplicity. But the multiplicity is not to be subjected to the oneness; it is constitutive of the oneness. The two, oneness and multiplicity, must coincide in an institution which possess a twofold ministry: the ministry of the πρῶτος (the first one) and the ministry of the “many” (the heads of the local Churches).  

Zizioulas does not offer any specific, practical advice as to how this might take shape. Instead he offers a critical word of encouragement to Roman Catholics when he claims that the ecclesiology of communion emerging from Vatican II can hopefully be up the task of shifting Catholic understanding of the church from the institution to communion, and particularly to communion as ontology.  

Thus we have seen in this section how Zizioulas used the fathers as sources for explaining Orthodox positions concerning such issues as how the Father is the fount of the Trinity, how the Eucharist serves to effect the presence of Christ for the community through the Spirit, and about the position and importance of the bishop. We have also seen how Zizioulas used the fathers as theological precedent in order to be critical of his own tradition on the matter of universal oversight within the church.

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298 Zizioulas, Being as Communion, 136.
299 Zizioulas, Being as Communion, 141.
300 There is not space for me to offer a full critique of Zizioulas at this point. However, I will offer, as I will for all four of these theologians, a sampling of what direction I would take in making such a critique. One place to focus with Zizioulas is on his concentration on the bishop. It may be the case that Zizioulas’ ecclesiology needs an understanding of the bishop as a person who is in a relationship, representing the
Lastly I will show how Erickson’s typology helps us to understand Zizioulas.

Quite naturally, Zizioulas’ view of the communion of the church and the most significant element of that communion, the bishop presiding at the Eucharist, place his ecclesiology within the Ignatian type that Erickson offers. In addition to this, I think it is important to note how much Zizioulas’ ecclesiology is also what Erickson calls Cyprianic. That is, it is true that Zizioulas places great emphasis on the bishop presiding at the Eucharist exhibiting the fullness of the church and its unity, but he also lays great emphasis on the office of bishop in its entirety: the individual bishops who preside at distinct Eucharists are all in a common position of oversight and by extension are equals one with another in this work. The bishops then relate to one another in mutual exhortation and accountability.

whole congregation and also becoming like God, a role that is of “eschatological decisiveness.” But it does not seem to be the case that this ecclesiological element follows from the patristic evidence, nor that the fathers Zizioulas cites meant anything quite as grand and encompassing. In other words, I think Zizioulas has pushed his patristic sources into his full systematic theology, when what they were offering were useful and beneficial images.

For Ignatius’ letter to the Magnesians, for example, we can see his purpose as not that of submitting a grand vision of how the heavenly and earthly realities are capable of interacting with one another. Instead, he was intending to urge ecclesial unity, especially by “doing all things in godly concord” (Magnesians 6.1 from Schoedel, 112). Thus, the images of bishop as like God, presbyters as like the council of apostles, and deacons as like the service of Jesus Christ was meant as exhortation, not as existentialism. In the same way, Zizioulas may push Maximus the Confessor too far. Instead of using the phrase, “eschatological decisiveness” to describe the role and function of the bishop when presiding at the Eucharist, he might have been more accurate if he used the phrase “eschatological reflection.” Maximus himself, from the same section Zizioulas cites, sounds more like this when he writes, “For it is necessary that things which manifest each other bear a mutual reflection in an altogether true and clear manner and keep their relationship intact” (from Maximus Confessor: Selected Writings, ed. George Charles Berthold [New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1985] 188-89). Thus the bishop is not the one who somehow ushers the heavenly and earthly realms towards each other while presiding at the Eucharist, but the one who reflects how the heavenly and earthly are present in each other through the Eucharist itself.
Miroslav Volf – Free Church

From a version of communion ecclesiology that makes heavy use of the Eucharist and the episcopacy we now move to another version which relies on and engages the church fathers, but offers a Free Church view. In his book *After Our Likeness*, Miroslav Volf engages both Western Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox views of communion ecclesiology. In so doing he makes a critical study of Joseph Ratzinger and John Zizioulas after which, naturally enough, he expounds his own understanding. I have chosen Volf because of his commitment to ecumenical engagement. In the preface to *After Our Likeness*, Volf explains that the goal of his “efforts is an ecumenical ecclesiology – not in the sense of a construct that draws on all traditions but is rooted in none, but in the sense that all the great themes of this unmistakably Protestant ecclesiological melody are enriched by Catholic and Orthodox voices.”

In answering the most fundamental question, what is the church, Volf relies directly upon two church fathers: Ignatius of Antioch and Irenaeus of Lyons. Volf uses these two in order to distinguish between the general and particular ways in which the Spirit of Christ is made present to and active in the world. Ignatius claims, “Wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the universal church.” Irenaeus claims, “Wherever the Spirit of God is, there is the church, and all grace.” Coupling these two, Volf claims the “Spirit-mediated relationship with the triune God and with the entire history of God’s people – a history whose center resides in Jesus’ own proclamation of the reign of God, in his death

303 *Smyrneans*, 8.2. I am here using the translation from Volf’s text, which unsurprisingly replaces “catholic” with “universal,” a more attractive translation from a Free Church perspective.
and in his resurrection – constitutes an assembly into a church.” As a buttress to this description of the church, Volf joins in the tradition of Free Church theologians to base his ecclesiology on Matthew 18:20, “… for where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” Yet he does so while producing evidence that this text has served as the basis for ecclesiology long before the Free Church tradition; indeed it has served so since the earliest church fathers, among whom, Volf cites Ignatius, Tertullian, and Cyprian.

Moreover, Volf uses his Free Church understanding of ecclesiology to argue against a commonly held reading of Ignatius on the necessity of the three-fold office of ministry. Typically, a Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox reading of Ignatius will couple two of his letters in order to argue that the three-fold office of ministry is simply essential to the make-up of the church. These readings fix the presence of Christ on the presence of the bishop, presbyter, and deacon. Ignatius writes to the Smyrnaeans, “wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the universal church,” and to the Trallians, “without these [deacons, presbyters, bishops], no [group] can be called a church.” The latter cannot, according to Volf, be the basis for the former. This is so because, as Volf writes:

> Since the only necessary intraecclesial condition of the constitutive presence of Christ for the church consists in people gathering in the name of Christ to profess faith in Christ before one another and before the world, the presence of Christ does not enter the church through the “narrow portals” of ordained office, but rather through the dynamic life of the entire church.

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305 Volf, After Our Likeness, 129.
306 The texts for these three fathers are for Ignatius, Smyrnaeans 8.2; for Tertullian, De exhortatione castitatis 7; and for Cyprian, De unitate 12, see After Our Likeness, 136.
307 Smyrnaeans 8.2 and Trallians 3.1 (Schoedel, p. 140 and 238). Again, I am using the translation from Volf’s text.
308 Volf, After Our Likeness, 152.
Related and more succinct, “That which the church is, namely, believing and confessing human beings, is precisely that which (as a rule) also constitutes it.”

While the ordained office is not part of the esse of the church, as Volf notes, but rather part of the bene esse, the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, however, are part of the esse. That is, the sacraments are essential to the life of the church since they are what provide the salvific grace of the triune God needed for those believers heralding the new creation. Thus, Volf states:

The correspondence between trinitarian and ecclesial communion derives not just from the formal demand to conceive the relation of the one and the many analogously on different levels. In substance, the correspondence is grounded in Christian baptism … If Christian initiation is a trinitarian event, then the church must speak of the Trinity as its determining reality. Because churches, in the power of the Holy Spirit, already form a communion with the triune God, ecclesial correspondence to the Trinity can become an object of hope and thus also a task for human beings.

Once more, Volf refers to the church fathers in order to substantiate his position on the correspondence between the Trinity and the church, one that is fresh to the Free Church tradition. Volf mentions Origen’s view that the church is full of the Trinity and Cyprian’s view that the church is made one by the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Because the correspondence between the Trinity and the church is novel for the Free Church tradition, Volf elucidates a potential Free Church view of the relationship between trinitarian communion and ecclesial communion. There is a particular quotation from Volf that encapsulates the distinctiveness of his view in relation to the Roman and

Eastern views of both the communion of the Trinity and the communion of the church. According to Volf: “The structure of Trinitarian relations is characterized neither by a pyramidal dominance of the one (so Ratzinger) nor by a hierarchical bipolarity between the one and the many (so Zizioulas), but rather by a polycentric and symmetrical reciprocity of the many.”\textsuperscript{312} The main issue Volf is defending here is the freedom of individuality, both for the godhead and the church. So, neither the typically Western view of the Trinity, whereby the nature of God takes precedence over the persons, nor the typically Eastern view, whereby the interrelatedness of the divine persons precisely is the divine nature, will suffice for Volf because in both cases the individual freedom of persons (whether divine or creaturely) is compromised.\textsuperscript{313}

Once more, Volf cites Ignatius to argue for an unfortunate development with regard to the bishop. In the bishop of Antioch’s letters to the Philadelphians and Magnesians, he stresses that the bishop is the one who preserves the church’s unity. In the former letter, “the council of the bishop” corresponds to the “unity of God,” while in the latter the bishop presides “in the place of God” within the church.\textsuperscript{314} Volf’s point

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[312]{Volf, \textit{After Our Likeness}, 217.}
\footnotetext[313]{There are two important points to note from Volf on these issues. I cite them here with a brief explanation. First, “Human persons are always external to one another as subjects … The indwelling of other persons is an exclusive prerogative of God … The Spirit indwells human persons, whereas human beings by contrast indwell the life-giving ambience of the Spirit, not the person of the Spirit. At the ecclesiastical level (and at the creaturely level in the broader sense), only the interiority of personal characteristics can correspond to the interiority of the divine persons” (\textit{After Our Likeness}, 211). Second, “If human persons cannot be internal to one another, then churches as fellowships of persons can be such even less. Accordingly, the divine perichoresis cannot serve as a model of interecclesial unity … Nevertheless, the perichoresis of the divine persons also possesses interecclesial relevance. Here, the correspondence between Trinity and church builds on the catholicity of the divine persons (\textit{After Our Likeness}, 213). The brief explanation is this: the correspondence is analogous and not anything stronger, and catholicity according to Volf has to do with how persons ‘carry within themselves’ other persons. So, for the Trinity this catholicity is a real indwelling (however much we can understand it), but for created persons (and collections thereof, such as the church/es) this catholicity must be mediated because of the fact that human beings “are always external to one another as subjects.”}
\footnotetext[314]{\textit{Philadelphians} 8.1 and \textit{Magnesians} 6.1 (Schoedel, 204 and 112).}
\end{footnotes}
here is that this is a problematic development from the descriptions of unity given in the New Testament, where “the unity of the church seems especially to come about through the indwelling of the one Spirit (and with it of the entire holy triunity) in every person. Accordingly, and in analogy to the Trinity, every person as a bearer of the Spirit participates in the constitution of unity.”

We can assess how Volf uses the church fathers in his ecclesiology of communion in a couple of ways. First, Volf uses the fathers in order to substantiate and further elucidate the basis of the church’s reality. In this way, Volf is being critical of his own Free Church tradition, urging its members to reconsider the urgency for finding communion with other churches. As we saw above, he uses Ignatius and Irenaeus to explain a Free Church view of what constitutes the church based on Matthew 18:20. On this view an assembly only becomes church when the Spirit initiates it into a relationship both with the triune God and with the whole history of God’s people. This view of communion ecclesiology is centered on what Volf calls the “polycentric and symmetrical reciprocity of the many.” We might call this use of the fathers a corroborative use; i.e., Volf employs the fathers to support and expound upon an ecclesiology that begins in Scripture.

Volf’s second use of the fathers might be called a conflictive use. Here Volf is using the fathers to promote his Free Church tradition’s position that bishops are not necessary for the church’s communion. In this case, Volf uses the fathers (specifically Ignatius, Irenaeus, and Cyprian) to show how they have strayed from Scripture regarding the office of ministry, in particular the bishop. However, I think Volf might be pressing

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the matter too far. The church fathers are not at odds with Scripture on this point, though admittedly they are writing about the office of bishop as it has extended beyond the historical context of the New Testament. For example, Ignatius’ Smyrnaeans 8.2 reads, “Wherever the bishop appears, there let the congregation be; just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the καθολικὴ church.” Volf largely focuses on the second half of this sentence and translates καθολικὴ as ‘universal’ instead of ‘whole’ or ‘catholic’.

By this he accomplishes two things: he continues his view that the ordained office in no way constitutes the church’s ecclesiality and he echoes the passage from Matthew 18:20 concerning how those believers gathered together in confession are constitutive of the church.

As a final word, we can now see how Volf fits into Erickson’s typology. Volf does not fit very neatly into Erickson’s typology because Volf’s view of the office of ministry or oversight is not as robust as that of someone like Zizioulas. Indeed, as noted above, Volf does not see any ordained office as part of the esse of the church, although he

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316 Ignatius of Antioch, (Schoedel, 238).

317 For example, each time Volf cites Ignatius’ Smyrnaeans 8.2 he translates the Greek ὅπου ἄν Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, ἐκκλησία καθολικὴ as “Wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the universal church.” Thus, in each case Volf translates the term καθολικὴ as ‘universal’. After the last such citation, Volf offers an examination of this very term and how to understand it. He offers no interpretation of Ignatius’ use itself, and goes on to claim that the most immediate understanding of the term after Ignatius had to do with geographical extension and only later with a theological meaning of something like ‘fullness’. In this way, Volf describes the catholicity of the church as the “fullness of salvation” (266).

318 Again, I do not have the space here to offer a full critique of Volf. Instead I will suggest one avenue I would follow further if I were to give a fuller critique. Volf seems to be so concerned to argue against the need for the ordained office, in particular the episcopacy, that he views Ignatius as the advent of a detrimental view. Instead of an ordained office being an essential part of what constitutes the church and its catholicity, Volf argues that such constitutive elements are the church’s “relations to other churches” and its “loyalty to the apostolic tradition” (After Our Likeness, 274 and 275). However, Volf does not appear to consider that it was just such concerns which may have occasioned Ignatius’ remarks to the Smyrnaeans in the first place, nor does Volf offer any mechanisms by which such elements are recognized or overseen. Indeed, Ignatius can be read to argue not that the bishop is necessarily constitutive of the church, but that the church’s catholicity is necessarily symbolized and reflected in the bishop. If Volf had entertained this line of thought, then maybe he could have engaged the patristic sources as even further aids to his Free Church arguments.
acknowledges it as a part of the *bene esse*. Nevertheless, we have some indications from Volf for how Erickson’s typology can help situate him. Volf’s ecclesiology has strong Irenaean and Ignatian elements. As we saw above, Volf cites both of these fathers to explain what and where the church is: from Irenaeus, the church is where the Holy Spirit is present; and from Ignatius, it is where Jesus Christ is present. While the sacraments are an essential activity of the church for participation in the presence of both the Spirit and Christ, even more at the core of this divine presence, for Volf, is the confession of the believing community. Given Volf’s descriptions, we can see this confession of faith as an aspect of Irenaeus: the confession of faith made by any given assembly of believers is that same confession which has been handed on faithfully through the generations and centuries.

Jean-Marie Roger Tillard – Roman Catholic

Jean-Marie Roger Tillard stands as one of the most influential and committed ecumenists of the Roman Catholic Church. He was a consultant to the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity for Vatican II and was involved in official Catholic ecumenical relationships with the Anglicans, the Disciples of Christ, and the Orthodox following Vatican II. His ecumenical and theological work were almost one and the same, with his writings focusing on the Bishop of Rome and communion ecclesiology.

Tillard’s understanding of communion ecclesiology centers on the Eucharist, for here we find the purpose of the church and its means toward achieving it. The church exists in order to bring salvation to the world. This salvation is an activity of the triune God and shown to the world through the sacrifice of the Son who was raised in the Spirit.
The primary act of the Eucharist is to bring believers into communion with God, which inherently brings believers into communion with one another. In both cases the salvation brought about is focused on reconciliation, since the members of the church are in need of forgiveness of sin. We will see below how Tillard uses the fathers to be critical of and to promote the Catholic Church. He uses the fathers as sources for understanding when he is critical of how Catholic theology needs to see the hierarchy of the Church as being in service to the Church’s communion and not place priority on hierarchy over communion. He uses the fathers as precedent for demonstrating that, notwithstanding his criticism, the role of the bishop within the hierarchy of the Church is necessary for the sake of communion.

A characteristically Western perspective arises in Tillard’s ecclesiology. The divine Trinitarian communion is based on the unity of the divine substance. Notwithstanding some imprecision on how Tillard understands this substance, one expression may be that it is just the communion under discussion, the conciliation that is lived perfectly in the Godhead. That is to say, the substance of the godhead, for Tillard, may be the very expression of how the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit live the life of the one God. Another way to phrase it, the being of the godhead is the life of God as triune. For the purpose of creation’s redemption, however, this oneness is known only through Christ’s body. And just as the Son and the Father are one, so too is the church one. As Tillard states, “[T]he ecclesial koinonia can be defined as the passing of the Trinitarian Communion into the fraternal relations of the disciples of Christ.” So, the unity of will

between the Son and the Father comes to dwell in the life of the church through the
Spirit, thereby bringing reconciliation both between God and the believers and between
believers themselves.

Tillard expressed his full view of communion ecclesiology in three main works:
*Church of Churches: The Ecclesiology of Communion*, *L’Eglise locale: Ecclésiologie de
communion et catholicité*, and *Flesh of the Church, Flesh of Christ*. In the first, Tillard
claims that the church’s communion is expressed in the joint relationships all the
churches have with one another. Lest this sound too idealistic or unrealistic, Tillard
wrote *L’Eglise locale* to argue how it is that the local church is fully church. One of the
main critiques of Tillard’s *Church of Churches* was that he drew conclusions from what
he claimed were patristic sources and the tradition of the early church without exposing
these sources very clearly. As a remedy, he wrote *Flesh of the Church, Flesh of
Christ*, which does just that.

From these three works, it is clear that Tillard is sacramental in his view of the
church’s communion. Tillard sees the church’s communion as a gift from God, a gift that
is primarily given in the sacrament of the Eucharist. However, the *visibility* of this
communion (both to the church and to the world) is most profoundly exhibited in the
office of bishop. This is where Tillard speaks of the various local churches having
representatives who make their ecclesial communities “recognizable” to one another,

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322 It is important to note here that while Tillard is an avowed ecumenist, he is speaking primarily of the
Roman Catholic Church. That is, the churches which make of this communion for Tillard are parishes
within Roman Catholic dioceses and those churches which are in full communion with Rome. The hoped-for
implications of his theology would gesture toward a sense of how *all* Christian communities might find
their life in such communion as well.
323 Tillard cites this in the preface to *Flesh of the Church*, vii-x.
since it is the bishop who bears the responsibility of representing the fullness of
communion.\textsuperscript{324} As Tillard states, “The first one responsible for \textit{communion}, the bishop
… is at the height of his function when, surrounded by presbyters ’who take the place of
the senate of the apostles,’ he presides at the celebration where the Flesh and Blood of the
Lord are given for the sake of unity.”\textsuperscript{325}

Yet for Tillard there is some tension between the primacy of the Eucharist and the
prominence of the bishop. This tension shows how Tillard both is critical of Catholic
theology and supportive of it. He uses the fathers as sources for understanding how the
hierarchy of the Church should be viewed as in service to the Church’s communion. He
also uses the fathers as precedent for maintaining the Catholic position that the bishop is
necessary within that hierarchy. On the one hand:

Everything is subordinated to this communion [i.e., the Eucharist], in particular
the hierarchical structure. Its necessity is beyond all doubt; it is unceasingly
present in the ecclesial consciousness. But it is never regarded as primary … that
is, as the ultimate reality God had in view in the eternal plan when the Son was
sent. The structure of the church belongs with the church on its journey, whereas
the principal effect of the Eucharist is already eschatological.\textsuperscript{326}

Here Tillard indicates that the office of bishop is necessary precisely as a means for
celebrating the Eucharist. On the other hand, Tillard does place the role of bishop at the
very foundation of the visible communion of the church. The local church, with its
pastor, is only in communion with other churches when it can be linked with “the deposit
of apostolic faith remaining faithfully preserved, defended and transmitted to it. … The
\textit{communion} of Churches is brought about, in fact, by this shift of the relationship to the

\textsuperscript{324} Tillard, \textit{Church}, 190-7; \textit{L’Eglise locale}, 244-50; \textit{Flesh}, 54-62.
\textsuperscript{325} Tillard, \textit{Church}, 185.
\textsuperscript{326} Tillard, \textit{Flesh}, 79.
foundation which the apostles are.” This can only come about by means of the bishop, who connects the church with the apostolic tradition and faith.

In *Church of Churches*, Tillard notes that the ordained minister has a number of roles, among them serving as president at the eucharistic table and serving as representative with other local churches. In *Flesh of the Church, Flesh of Christ*, Tillard cites Ignatius to the Magnesians in pointing to the role of the bishop in the eucharistic life of the local church:

> As the Lord, being united to the Father, did nothing without the Father, neither by himself nor through the apostles, so you are to do nothing without the bishop and the presbyters. … There is one Jesus Christ, who is unexcelled. And so run together to the one temple of God, the one altar, the one Jesus Christ, who came forth from one Father and is with and has returned to the Father.

In this way, the bishop and the presbyters are likened to the Father and the Magnesians to the Son; the Son did nothing without the Father, so too the Magnesians should do nothing without the bishop – the one who presides at the Eucharist – and presbyters, who themselves are under the oversight and authority of the bishop.

Tillard sees that the second role of the ordained minister, serving as representative, is accomplished early in the church’s history by the ordained minister who holds the office of bishop. In defense of this he cites both Ignatius of Antioch and Irenaeus of Lyons. For instance Tillard cites Ignatius’ letters in order to claim:

> The Eucharistic celebration being the gathering together of the entire community around Christ, ‘head’ of his People in the double sense of the word *kephale*, it becomes normal then that the one who presides at it be

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327 Tillard, *Church*, 189.
328 Tillard, *Church*, 190 ff.
that same person who presides daily over its unity and its charity. Ignatius proceeds from the ‘unitive’ function of the bishop to his ‘Eucharistic’ presidency, and not vice versa.\textsuperscript{330}

In this passage, Tillard refers to Ignatius’ letters to the Smyrnaeans 6.2, Trallians 3.1-2, Philadelphians 2.1 and 7.2, and Magnesians 7.1-2.\textsuperscript{331}

In further discussion of the second major facet of his communion ecclesiology, that the bishop serves both as representative of Christ and as representative of the church local and the church catholic, Tillard cites Irenaeus’ \textit{Adversus Haereses}. Tillard states:

In order to find the true Church this is where one must look [i.e., to the authority of the apostles which now resides in the bishops]. Besides, in a parallel way to the emerging of the episcopate as the principal ministry, there is produced an amalgam of ‘representation’ with the theme of the bishop as the ‘representative of Christ’.\textsuperscript{332}

Again, while it is true that the office of bishop for Irenaeus is an office of representation, this representation serves a slightly different purpose than simply representing Christ to the local church or to represent the local church to other churches. For Irenaeus, the bishop is a central figure for the church because he is the vehicle by which the church passes on right teaching. Irenaeus was a bishop himself – in an outlying territory of the

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Tillard, \textit{Church}, 185.}
\footnote{Again, there is not space for a full critique of Tillard here. However, I can suggest at least one direction in which I would go with a critique. Upon examination it is not clear that Tillard is accurate when he claims that the bishop’s unitive function is prior in some fashion to his presidency at the Eucharist. Rather, it seems that in Ignatius’ letters, the bishop is the locus of unity \textit{because} of his presidency at the Eucharist. It is true that Ignatius sees the need for the bishop to be regarded “as the Lord himself” (\textit{Ephesians} 6.1; Schoedel, 54). Further, Ignatius claims, “Wherever the bishop appears, there let the congregation be; just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the whole [catholic] church” (\textit{Smyrnaeans} 8.2; Schoedel, 238). However, this “regard” and this “presence” are only the case \textit{because} of Christ and his presence in the Eucharist; Christ’s presence is primary. That is, Christ’s presence is what gives the bishop his legitimacy as president and as a unitive force. A passage from Ignatius that shows this is from his letter to the Philadelphians, “Be eager, then, to celebrate one eucharist; for one is the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, one the cup for union through his blood; one the altar, just as one the bishop along with the presbytery and deacons, my fellow slaves; that whatever you do, you may do it in a godly way” (\textit{Philadelphians} 4.1; Schoedel, 197). Here we see clearly the priority of the Eucharist to the presidency of the bishop. The Lord, the cup, the altar are all the reason for and basis of the bishop with the presbytery and the deacons; the latter are representatives of the former. So, the bishop’s unitive function proceeds from his eucharistic presidency, and not vice versa.}
\footnote{Tillard, \textit{Church}, 191.}
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Roman Empire – and concerned with the ways in which the teaching of the church could be verified as the same and indeed unified when it existed in different cultures and languages. His response was to cite the office of bishop as the way in which the teaching was made secure.\textsuperscript{333}

In the same vein, Tillard uses Irenaeus to demonstrate the early practice of bishops serving in a “collegial” fashion with one another in order to make decisions that would benefit the larger church:

In this way, according to the intuition of Irenaeus speaking about the unity of Tradition (which the episcopate must preserve), the unanimity of transmission and the diversity of expressions will be maintained. ‘Collegiality,’ when it is formally exercised in the councils, will bring the bishops together already united in this regional solidarity.\textsuperscript{334}

Here Tillard is highlighting the characteristically Roman Catholic emphasis on the communion bishops have with one another based on the fact that they are joint holders of the one office ministry that oversees the faith of the church.

So, we have seen how Tillard is critical of at least one point of Catholic ecclesiology, that regarding the hierarchy of the Church. Tillard uses the fathers as sources for understanding how the Church should view the hierarchy as, first and foremost, in service to the communion of the Church – that the communion of the Church is primary. We have also seen how Tillard promotes Catholic ecclesiology, in particular the structure of that very hierarchy that is in service to the Church’s communion. Tillard uses the fathers as precedent for holding the position that the office of bishop, in particular, is the necessary element of the hierarchy that serves the Church’s communion.

\textsuperscript{334} Tillard, Church, 205.
Now we can make some comments on how Tillard relates to Erickson’s typology. Given the above presentation, we can say that Tillard’s ecclesiology is both Ignatian and Cyprianic. Tillard holds that the Eucharist is the central event by which the church is brought into being and that it is the bishop who is the main president at the Eucharist. Moreover, the bishop, precisely because of his role in the Eucharist, serves as the central visible expression of the church’s communion. In this way, Tillard’s ecclesiology resembles Ignatius in its stress on the local Eucharist as presided over by a bishop and it resembles Cyprian in its stress on the collegiality of the bishops. One important element in Tillard’s ecclesiology which does not find firm enough footing in Erickson’s typology is the bishop of Rome, who is the lead bishop among those equal in the office of bishop.

Wolfhart Pannenberg – Lutheran

Representative of a Lutheran version of communion ecclesiology is Wolfhart Pannenberg. I have chosen Pannenberg because of his influence both in Europe and America as a theologian and as one involved in ecumenical work. His work has largely been taken up with revelation, theology, and christology, but he has not divorced these from the life of the church. His ecumenical work has shown in his concern for the life of the church in the world at large as well as his concern for the historical divisions of the church. With the publication of the third and final volume of his *Systematic Theology*,

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Pannenberg has provided us with a learned and robust understanding of what the church is and does.\textsuperscript{336}

At its core, the church, for Pannenberg, is the Body of Christ; this he prefers over the notion of the church as the People of God (though he will argue that the latter has its grounding in the former). The chief activity of the church, for Pannenberg, is to make it so the individual believer meets the risen Christ. This occurs in the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist. While the individual relates to Christ at first through confession of faith and baptism, Pannenberg notes, “Nowhere, however, does the inner link between believers’ fellowship with Jesus Christ and their fellowship with one another find representation as it does in celebrating the Eucharist.”\textsuperscript{337} In other words, the point of the gathered communion of the church is to effect a communion between the believer and the triune God and among the believers themselves through the very presence of Jesus Christ. In the discussion below we will see how Pannenberg uses the church fathers as sources for understanding in order to be critical of his tradition by maintaining that some form of the office of the bishop should exist and in order to promote his tradition by stressing the importance of salvation for the individual believer. He also uses the fathers as precedent for how the offices of bishop and presbyter have had and can have overlapping episcopal qualities.

Given this basic orientation toward ecclesiology, we can see how Pannenberg represents one Lutheran view. If the church’s main task is to effect belief in the

\textsuperscript{337} Pannenberg, \textit{Systematic}, 102.
individual, then the church must be a recognizably embodied reality. As Pannenberg writes:

The Reformation view of the church as the *communio* that is united with Christ its Head in the unity of faith and love among its members stands in a tradition that reaches back to the patristic church and is rooted in the NT (1 Cor. 10:16-17; Eph. 4:15-16), the point being that the church finds its primary realization in the worship of the community assembled at each place. ⁵³³⁸

Elucidating this point, Pannenberg refers to Ignatius of Antioch and his letter to the Smyrnaeans to argue that these assemblies are not isolated and disparate incidents. Quite the contrary, where Jesus Christ is present in the gathered community, so too the entire church is present, as Ignatius claims, “Wherever the bishop appears, there let the congregation be; just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the whole church.” ³³³⁹

Pannenberg is here using Ignatius as a source for understanding how churches are not isolated but present to one another through Christ.

Pannenberg refers again to this passage from Ignatius in conjunction with citations from Polycarp (both his *Martyrdom* 16.2 and his *Letter to the Philippians*, preface) to argue for the present catholicity of the church in a characteristically Lutheran manner:

The catholic church, then, does not consist primarily of a global organization and structure of order that embraces all local churches. It finds manifestation in the local churches and through their fellowship with one another. This fellowship declares itself especially in the ‘conciliar’ fellowship of congregation leaders, just as, conversely, the bishop or pastor represents the whole church in a local congregation. ³⁴⁰

Pannenberg does not intend this to be a free association of congregations – just as a particular congregation is not a free association of individuals who find that they agree

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³³³⁹ *Smyrnaeans* 8.2 (Schoedel, 238).
³⁴⁰ Pannenberg, *Systematic*, 408.
about Jesus Christ. Rather, the fellowship of congregations with one another is an inherent quality of what it means to be congregation in the first place – just as the fellowship of individual Christians with one another is an inherent quality of what it means to be Christian in the first place. Again, Pannenberg is using Ignatius as a source for understanding how profound the catholicity of the church really is.

Here Pannenberg shows a keen awareness of the tension between which is primary, the faith of the individual or the faith of the church. Thus, he recognizes the proper historical and theological advancement with regard to baptismal confessions.341 Early in the church’s life, the catechumens of various times and places would profess various baptismal formulae, all of them being Trinitarian in their make-up. However, over time the formulae became more regularized, and thus, “[i]n the history of Christian confession … there is a reversal of the relation between individual confession and that of the church inasmuch as the church’s faith comes to define the confession that individuals make.”342 Yet there is a kind of dialectical feature in Pannenberg’s view on the relationship between the individual and the church, one demonstrated when he writes:

we cannot possibly think of the church preceding individual faith. Yet it would be equally mistaken to think of the church’s fellowship as in some way secondary and supplementary to the faith of individual Christians. The content of this faith makes this plain, as does also the fact of its mediating by the proclamation, the instruction, and the liturgical life of the church.343

Further, in undeniably Lutheran fashion, Pannenberg rests the unity of the church on the “pure teaching of the apostolic gospel and administration of the sacraments.”344 It is here that we come ineluctably to the ordained ministers of the church, for it is on those

341 Pannenberg, Systematic, 116-17.
342 Pannenberg, Systematic, 117.
343 Pannenberg, Systematic, 97.
persons that the charge of rightly preaching and administering falls. At this point also, Pannenberg references the early church, not for the efficacy of the gospel and sacraments for the individual believer, but for the sake of the communion of the church itself. Pannenberg writes, “On the view of ecclesial *communio* in the early church, the fellowship of local congregations finds expression in mutual recognition of the ministers who represent them, especially when they assemble at a council.”345 Here Pannenberg is using the fathers as precedent for how the unity of the church is based on ordained ministers safeguarding the teaching and practices of the church.

Ecclesially, then, it is necessary from Pannenberg’s view to have a ministerial office for the sake of the unity of the church based on that office’s role in safeguarding the teaching and practices of the church. However, ecumenically, Pannenberg argues that both the regional role of the bishop and the more narrowly local role of the presbyter have episcopal qualities and that the arduous work comes in making sense of this for the sake of the church’s communion.346 Pannenberg rehearses the patristic evidence for both views.347 He cites the almost interchangeable use of the terms bishop and presbyter for the likes of Polycarp and Clement of Rome, and mentions that it is with Ignatius that we have any clear distinction between them (and deacons) as to role and function.348 With Ignatius, the role of bishop is elevated over that of presbyter and deacon, giving it prominence and preeminence. However, as Pannenberg notes, “the older view of the

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346 Here it is good to note that Pannenberg’s thoughts on these matters of ecclesial office are from a chapter which opens with a discussion of “the common commission of believers and the office of unity” (*Systematic*, 372-92). Thus we see Pannenberg’s evangelical emphasis, where all believers are called to be witnesses to salvation from Christ.
348 Pannenberg lists Polycarp’s *Letter to the Philippians* 5.3 and *I Clement* 42.4, 44.1, and 44.5. For Ignatius he cites the *Letter to the Smyrnaeans* 8.1 and *Letter to the Trallians* 3.1.
unity of their [episcopal and presbyteral] ministries was not forgotten. Jerome in particular transmitted it to the Middle Ages, and it even found canonical recognition in the Decree of Gratian.\footnote{Pannenberg, Systematic, 417. The reference to Jerome is to his Commentary on Titus and his Epistle 146.1. The Decretal reference is 1.95.5. It is just with this impasse between what we might call the views of Ignatius and Jerome that Pannenberg is critical of the Lima report Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry. He writes: “Certainly a distinguishing and relating of the local pastor (as bishop) and a college of leaders (as presbyters) in each church accords best with the Ignatian schema applied to the local church, and the function of the deacon in the early church might be restored merely by combining the present-day activities of deacons with their function as vicars and representatives of the pastor (bishop). But all this would contribute in no way to clarifying the problem that arose in late antiquity and the Middle Ages: whether we are to regard the ministry of local and regional leadership as essentially one and the same” (Systematic, 418).} It is just this view that Pannenberg notes the Reformers took up in their debates with the Catholic Church in the sixteenth century. Pannenberg is using the fathers on this point as precedent for how to be critical of the form of the office of bishop, not necessarily the function and responsibilities of the bishop.

This brings us back around to the Lutheran character of Pannenberg’s ecumenical ecclesiology. He stresses the interrelatedness of the life of the individual believer with that of the church such that the communion the believer has with God and with the church rests in an encounter with the true faith, an encounter that occurs in the proclamation of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. This proclamation and administration in turn are placed in the charge of the ministers of the church. The communion of the church then rests directly on the patristic notions of the individual’s communion with God in the Eucharist and the communion between congregations as expressed through the office of ministry.\footnote{While I cannot provide a full critique of Pannenberg, I can offer some preliminary assessment of Pannenberg’s use of the church fathers along a couple of lines. First, we can see both a non-use and use of the church fathers when he is presenting his view of what constitutes the communion of the church. Pannenberg places a good deal of emphasis on the individual Christian’s confession of faith and participation in baptism as the initial basis for that person’s communion with both God and with the rest of the church. He does not, however, use the church fathers to explore this, except to make mention of how baptismal formulae had shifted between the first and fourth centuries (as noted above). Pannenberg’s view}"
We have seen how Pannenberg promotes his Lutheran tradition and how he is critical of it as well. He uses the church fathers as sources for understanding the notions of the fellowship and catholicity of the church. In this first use, Pannenberg largely promotes a Lutheran understanding. He has also uses the fathers as precedent for how to see the many ways in which the offices of bishop and presbyter are responsible for the oversight of the church. In this second use, Pannenberg both promotes a Lutheran view and is critical. He promotes the Lutheran view that the oversight of the church has taken and can legitimately still take different forms. He is critical in that he sees the office of bishop as fulfilling many of the responsibilities of oversight and should be recovered by Lutherans.

Finally, we can see how Pannenberg’s ecclesiology relates to the typology offered by Erickson. We should recall that Erickson’s focus is on the office of ministry and the exercise of *episkopé*. It seems, then, that Pannenberg is a combination of what Erickson calls the Protestant Irenaean position and the Orthodox Ignatian position, showing how Erickson’s work is helpful but in need of alteration when examining a specific of the communion of the church based on confession and baptism may very well have been strengthened if he had made more use of the early church’s lengthy and involved preparations for baptism as well as exploring the significance of its serious disagreements over the role of baptism and faith during and after times of persecution (Cyprian). If Pannenberg does not use the fathers to help explain his position on the initial bases for communion (confession of faith and baptism), he does do so when explaining the Eucharist as the representation of the communion (of fellowship) which believers have with both God and one another. Here he draws upon fathers like Ignatius and Polycarp to highlight how central the Eucharist was as expression of unity.

Second, we see how Pannenberg traces the development and understanding of the office of ministry, particularly in its episcopal and presbyteral forms, of the fathers into the sixteenth century and beyond. In particular here we see how Pannenberg holds to a typically Lutheran view that the office of ministry was necessary for the enactment of the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. He avails himself of the positions of Ignatius, Clement of Rome, and Jerome to defend this view. In doing so, he traces the history of the reception of these fathers through the Middle Ages and into the sixteenth century. While so expounding, however, Pannenberg seems to give no real attention to how the office of ministry might inherently bear elements of and responsibility for its activities, as perhaps the fathers themselves understood. Pannenberg’s position would be less parochially functional if he had given such attention.
theologian. Pannenberg holds that the office of ministry is responsible, in the main, for proper preaching and teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. Given this combination, Pannenberg stresses the responsibility of the ordained office for receiving, keeping, and handing on the teachings and message of the one faith (Irenaeus), as well as the central role of the ordained office in the celebration of the Eucharist (Ignatius), the central expression of the unity of the church. Thus, while Pannenberg’s ecclesiology is not as overtly an ecclesiology of communion as is the case for Zizioulas or Tillard, it does incorporate key aspects of communion ecclesiology: viewing the church as the Body of Christ, emphasizing the local assembly of the church as an expression of the fullness of the church, and holding up the office of ministry as a central sign of the unity of the church.

In this section we have examined the communion ecclesiologies of theologians from four representative traditions: John Zizioulas (Orthodox), Miroslav Volf (Free Church), Jean-Marie Tillard (Roman Catholic), and Wolfhart Pannenberg (Lutheran). We have done so under the guidance of Robert Jenson’s distinction between the church’s being and structure. We have paid attention to how these theologians have used the church fathers in formulating their own views on communion ecclesiology. In each case we have seen how the representative theologian has used the church fathers in their formulations of ecclesiologies of communion, whether that use be as source for understanding a given doctrinal point, as model for how churches can approach a matter today, or as precedent which churches need to consider in making decisions about ecumenical issues. Lastly, we have made use of John Erickson’s patristic typology (with
critical adjustment) to situate and analyze these theologians, particularly on the structure of the church that pertains to episkopé.

At this point, we need to focus on the basic elements of communion ecclesiology as Lutherans and Catholics would each construct it, and how each side would make use of *ressourcement* is doing so. The next section explores the relationship between communion ecclesiology and *ressourcement* for both churches.

*The Relationship between Communion Ecclesiology and Ressourcement for Lutherans and Roman Catholics*

Returning to Robert Jenson’s reflections, when we begin to answer the question of what relationship communion ecclesiology has with *ressourcement*, we can make use of the distinction between what the church is in and of itself ontologically and what the church’s structure may be in the world. There is a complex and intricate overlap between these two issues. Ecumenically, it is hopeful to witness churches from diverse traditions conversing together constructively about the relationship between the Trinity and the church’s nature. The difficulty comes, however, when these very same churches struggle to make positive connections between the Trinity and the visible form or structure of the church made public to the world. It appears that the return to the church fathers for help on these matters has its limits ecumenically because, while the church fathers can be used as sources, or models, or precedents for contemporary understanding and decision-making, they are not in themselves directive. That is, the fathers can provide teaching, models for ministry, and precedent for belief and action, but they only do so in that they are being put to use in the current ecumenical situation *by particular churches*. Thus the
focus of my study, that is, we should learn how these churches make use of the fathers. It is the combination of the manner in which the fathers are used along with what the fathers actually said that is a real hope for the ecumenical movement.

In this and the last chapter, we have examined the relationship between communion ecclesiology and ressourcement (i.e., the return to and use of the fathers) in four traditions. Along the way, we saw how the church fathers were used in various ways. For this section, I will narrow the investigation to take in the ways Lutherans and Roman Catholics characteristically formulate versions of communion ecclesiology and the patristic sources they use in doing so. This is important for my larger project, because in the next three chapters I will be assessing the use of the fathers in the U.S. Lutheran-Catholic dialogue. To remind the reader, in the next chapter I will examine the rounds of the dialogue wherein the fathers function as historical background but do not feature in the constructive ecumenical arguments, while in the following two chapters the rounds of the dialogue wherein the fathers do feature in the ecumenical arguments. The difference is that for the first group of dialogue rounds the topics are not given an ecclesial focus or related directly to the church. For the second group of dialogue rounds, however, they are so focused and related. In particular, as communion ecclesiology grows to become more and more the dominant vision of the church for ecumenical work and as the points for discussion are set more directly in their ecclesial context, the fathers feature more directly in the ecumenical arguments.

This section will recall and draw upon the earlier discussion of the ecclesiologies of Tillard and Pannenberg, representatives of Catholic and Lutheran views. There will be two parts: one will give general characterizations of typically Lutheran and Catholic
emphases for communion ecclesiology; the other will give typically Lutheran and Catholic patristic orientations for these ecclesiologies. The first is a study from the Ecumenical Institute in Strasbourg, France, entitled “Communio/Koinonia: A New Testament-Early Christian Concept and Its Contemporary Appropriation and Significance.”\textsuperscript{351} The second is the essay by John Erickson we have already explored above entitled “Episkopé and Episcopacy in Modern Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue: An Orthodox Perspective,” wherein he delineates how the three great traditions of the church (Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant) tend to articulate their respective understandings of episkopé along the lines of a particular patristic heritage (Ignatian, Cyprianic, and Irenaean, respectively).\textsuperscript{352}

According to “Communio/Koinonia”, a Lutheran communion ecclesiology maintains three basic convictions that extend back to the Reformation era.\textsuperscript{353} First, communion of believers and communion of churches must be a communion in confession of faith. Confessions, as elements of Lutheran heritage, have been important and still function to serve as a basis for interpretation of the faith. Second, communion in understanding and practice of preaching and administration of the sacraments is essential. Communion is realized most directly through these means. Third, communion does not necessitate uniformity of merely human practices. Thus, there are legitimate differences in church order, theology, and piety.

\textsuperscript{351} The version I am using is Appendix 2 in \textit{A Commentary on “Ecumenism: The Vision of the ELCA,”} ed. William G. Rusch (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 119-41; hereafter, “Communio/Koinonia.”
\textsuperscript{353} “Communio/Koinonia,” 133-35.
Similarly, “Communio/Koinonia” claims that a Roman Catholic communion ecclesiology stresses the interrelation of participation in divine life and church life. This communion is realized in the preaching of the Gospel and especially in the celebration of the Eucharist. Further, this *communio* of eucharistic fellowship “presupposes a fellowship in faith.”

At the local level this communion is expressed in the life of a diocese gathered around the Eucharist presided over by the bishop. At the universal level, this communion is expressed in the communion of local churches. For each of these expressions there is a personal office of leadership and oversight: in the first instance, the bishop, in the second, the pope.

To recall what we discovered from Erickson earlier in the chapter, the Lutheran view of communion ecclesiology is best represented as an Irenaean view, having its basis in Irenaeus of Lyons. An Irenaean view contends that the main role of the ordained minister (whether presbyter or bishop) is to witness to and proclaim “the apostolic faith, on the basis of apostolic scripture.” Thus, the ordained minister serves as an *alter apostolus*, someone who bears in his own office, teaching, and activity the truths of the faith. The Catholic view is best represented as a Cyprianic view, having its basis in Cyprian of Carthage. A Cyprianic view contends that the office of bishop is a single office, represented by the bishops of Rome. Thus, the bishop serves as an *alter Petrus*, one who bears in himself the bond of unity with all other bishops as representatives of their local expressions of the church. Again, as I mentioned earlier, although Erickson’s taxonomy is useful, I would argue that there are elements of complexity that need

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354 “Communio/Koinonia,” 130.
355 Erickson, “Episkopé,” 98.
attention, especially as we focus on the particular traditions of Lutheranism and Catholicism. Chief among them is that both Lutherans and Catholics highly regard what Erickson would call an Ignatian view, namely that the celebration of the local Eucharist is a fundamental expression and origination of communion. As we will see in later chapters, the central ecumenical question becomes, which office of ministry is most appropriately suited to have the Eucharist in its charge?

Using the descriptions from “Communio/Koinonia” we can compare Pannenberg’s ecclesiology with Tillard’s, as they were explored above. We can see similarities and differences between the two. Both theologians place great emphasis on the communion that exists between the believer and God. Both see the Eucharist as the central expression and origin of this communion. And both see the unity of the church as a gift from God that shares in and reflects the unity of the godhead itself. Both Pannenberg and Tillard use the fathers as evidence for these positions. However, differences remain, centered mainly on the office of ministry. Pannenberg uses patristic sources to argue that the question of which office is primary concerning the Eucharist (bishop or presbyter) is unsettled. Tillard does not see the ambivalence on this point and vigorously defends the role of the bishop in this regard, likewise using patristic sources as bulwarks. These similarities and differences between Pannenberg and Tillard will be noticeable in the next three chapters as we look at the U.S. Lutheran-Catholic dialogue.

Conclusion

As we have seen in this and the previous chapter, the rise in interest in communion ecclesiology coupled with the renaissance movement has produced
various understandings of that ecclesiology from many different quarters. In each case, the church fathers have been used to support a given tradition’s view of the church while at the same time used to give witness to the unity of the church which transcends any given tradition. As we saw in the chapter on the sixteenth century, the Reformers and the Catholics initially saw the fathers as more or less common territory (yet reading them in different ways), though very quickly each tradition had ways in which it attempted to commandeer the fathers for their own polemical purposes. In this chapter we have seen how the fathers have again become more or less common territory as each of the traditions examined (Eastern Orthodoxy, Protestantism [without Lutherans], Roman Catholicism, and Lutheranism) have forayed into earnest ecumenical ecclesiology. The next chapters will demonstrate in detail how the Lutherans and Catholics in the United States have treated the fathers in their bilateral dialogue.
CHAPTER 5
THE CHURCH FATHERS USED
IN CONSTRUCTING HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Introduction

As indicated earlier, the church fathers are used in two basic ways in the U.S. Lutheran/Catholic dialogue. In the first way, they are mined to construct histories for a particular topic or issue as background to the constructive ecumenical argument. In the other, they are used in the constructive ecumenical arguments being made during a particular dialogue round. This chapter will explore the former and chapters 6 and 7 the latter. The topics in the rounds addressed in this chapter either were not issues of apostolicity, or the L/RC did not treat them as such. This coordinates with how the L/RC did not use the fathers in the ecumenical arguments of these rounds. The topics for the rounds examined in the next two chapters were treated as topics related to apostolicity, and so the L/RC’s use of the fathers helped the dialogue reach ecumenical convergence, consensus, or agreement.

When the U.S. Lutheran/Catholic dialogue uses the fathers to construct history, it does so in two different ways. For three of the rounds, both the Lutherans and the Catholics use the fathers jointly. These three rounds are L/RC II, One Baptism for the Remission of Sins (1966), L/RC VII, Justification (1985), and L/RC VIII, The One
Mediator, the Saints, and Mary (1992). In these rounds, Lutherans and Catholics agree on how to use the fathers as sources for fashioning histories that are put to use in further ecumenical conversation. Moreover, they agree on how to construct the history of these subjects for the sake of ecumenical work. For the fourth round treated in this chapter, the Lutherans and the Catholics read the fathers differently from one another. The very first, L/RC I is entitled Status of the Nicene Creed as Dogma of the Church (1965). In this round, Lutherans and Catholics do not agree on how to construct the history of the development of the homoousion, and this disagreement is reflected in the theological disagreements cited in the two views of the development of doctrine. Additionally, there is another difference between these two groups of dialogues. For the first group, the dialogue makes use of specific church fathers, while for the second group, it does not refer to the fathers as specifically, but in more general terms.

Throughout this chapter I will show specific examples of how the L/RC uses the fathers to construct history as background to the constructive ecumenical argument of these dialogue rounds. Here is a preview of those uses. There are two main categories and one minor category of uses. The first main category has to do with ecclesial practice. In this category, the L/RC uses the fathers to produce histories of two kinds of practices: the baptismal practice of infant baptism (addressed in L/RC II) and the devotional practices regarding the saints and Mary (addressed in L/RC VIII). In L/RC II, the fathers are used to construct a history that affirms the common ground found between Lutherans and Catholics, one witnessed to in the ancient church – both baptize infants. In L/RC VIII, the fathers are used to construct a history that explains the development of and variety of devotional practices regarding the saints and Mary that were the common
inheritance of Reformers and Catholics alike, yet the two sides diverged concerning which practices to keep and what they mean. So a common construction of history may or may not be an aid to ecumenical dialogue partners as they strive for convergence, consensus, or agreement on church practice. Such histories, however, can at least heavily inform each side of a dialogue as to the fuller picture of their own and – probably more importantly – the other side’s history, along with the history shared between the two. Being thus informed, these dialogue partners can hopefully more easily see wider opportunities for ecumenical rapprochement over ecclesial practices.

The second main category has to do with the development of doctrine. In this category, the L/RC uses the fathers to produce histories for all four dialogue rounds under examination in this chapter. L/RC II uses the fathers to construct a history of the development of doctrine about the meaning of baptism for the remission of sins, one that is careful to show that the Augustinian problematic of original sin arrives after the creedal formulation and should not be read back into the earlier understandings. L/RC VII uses the fathers to create histories which demonstrate that the sixteenth century problems surrounding the doctrine of justification were particularly Western ones that grew out of Augustine’s own theology and, more importantly, the reception of his theology throughout the medieval period. L/RC VIII uses the fathers to construct a history which explores the various and complex issues encompassing the development of theologies and doctrines for how to understand the saints and Mary, and how these understandings track into the Middle Ages and sixteenth century. Finally, L/RC I uses the fathers to construct a history of the development of the Nicene Creed. However, here we have a difference. There is a common assessment between the Lutherans and Catholics on what
gave rise to the creed at Nicaea. But there is a divergence in how to understand the product of that history. As we will see, Lutherans place more emphasis on the meaning underlying the creedal formulation, while Catholics stress that the meaning of the creed is inherently caught up in the formulation itself.

The one minor category has to do with the “patristic intent” of the Reformers and Trent regarding the efficacy of baptism. In this category, L/RC II uses the fathers to construct a history of the sixteenth century and how both sides desired to hearken back to the fathers in order to demonstrate how they each held the same views as the fathers concerning how baptism is universally effective. Interestingly, L/RC II uses the fathers for all three categories, though only it uses them for this category.

Another item that needs attention in this introduction is the presence or absence of communion ecclesiology in these dialogue rounds. Why L/RC VII, on justification, and VIII, on the saints and Mary, do not make use of communion ecclesiology may need some more explanation. The issue of time is not a problem. Both rounds are later, L/RC VII in 1985 (the same year as the Roman Catholic Extraordinary Synod which proclaimed communion ecclesiology to be the dominant ecclesiology taught at and received from Vatican II) and L/RC VIII in 1992. Three of the intervening L/RC rounds (III, IV, and V) make use of communion ecclesiology, so we might expect L/RC VII and VIII to do so as well. The difference, then, seems to be on the treatment of the subject matter. L/RC VII deals with justification in terms of it being a criterion by which to judge ecclesial practices, structures, and theologies and in terms of a set of material convergences that describe convictions Lutherans and Catholics share about God’s justice and how it obtains for believers. L/RC VIII deals with the saints and Mary in terms of
just these material convergences from L/RC VII. That is, L/RC VIII holds the teachings about the saints and Mary from Vatican II (and the practices they defend) up against the common convictions between Lutherans and Catholics on justification in order to assess those teachings and practices. In neither case does the L/RC relate the subject matter directly to the nature or structure of the church.

One possible explanation for why these later two rounds do not relate their subjects to the use and thereby do not make use of communion ecclesiology is because the L/RC may have been working within an implicit context of communion ecclesiology. This is to say that the L/RC dialogue was making use of the vision of communion ecclesiology in order to discuss the subjects of justification and of the saints and Mary without having to concern itself with the nature and structure of the church. That concern may be approached later. Indeed, as I will mention below, there have been examples of ecumenical dialogues that have related these subjects directly to the church, dialogues which have also made use of the church fathers in doing so. One of my main observations is that the L/RC has used the fathers to construct histories in dialogue rounds where it has not related the subject matter directly to the nature and structure of the church, while it has used the fathers in the constructive ecumenical argument in rounds where it has related the subject to the church. In the case of the subjects for the rounds addressed in this chapter, they are not directly related to the church and so references to or incorporations of communion ecclesiology are not present.

It may not be too surprising that references to communion ecclesiology are not made in the first two rounds of the L/RC, on the Nicene Creed and on baptism. Firstly, these rounds are so early (1965 and 1966, respectively) that they fall in the timeframe of
when a sense of communion ecclesiology was moving from the realm of individual theologians into the larger Church (at least for Catholics, at Vatican II). Secondly, the treatment of the subjects for both rounds does not lend itself to relating the subject matter directly to the church. L/RC I treats the Nicene Creed as a formulation of central beliefs recognized as such by both sides, but it does not address the role of the Creed in the life of either church. Likewise, L/RC II treats baptism primarily in regard to how it effects the forgiveness of sins for believers, not as a part of the sacramental life of the church nor as a means of initiation into the church itself.

These original treatments, however, are certainly not the only treatments possible. That is, there is an implicit, if unexplored in these early rounds, connection between each of the subjects of these rounds and the church. Certainly by now the two sides could address this connection within the framework of communion ecclesiology. Notwithstanding this, these rounds are important to my overall project because they do have these implicit connections and because they so clearly use the church fathers to construct histories which are then used as background to the constructive ecumenical arguments of these rounds. What does seem to be the case for these rounds is that both sides had come to the realization that the church encompasses but is larger than either the Lutheran or Roman Catholic churches. Because of such, both sides enjoined ecumenical conversations in the first place.

This chapter will be divided into two main parts, each dealing with one of these ways of using the fathers to construct histories: either ‘jointly’ or ‘differently’. At the

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356 Admittedly, Lutherans and Catholics have their own ways of understanding what such a statement means, and indeed it is one of the great ecumenical conundrums of contemporary ecumenical relationships between Lutherans and Catholics.
end I will make some concluding comments and also present two tables. The first will show in which documents of a specific dialogue round the fathers are used (either common statements or background essays). The second table will show which patristic sources are used in each dialogue round.

*Joint Uses of the Fathers to Construct Histories*

In this part I will explore the three rounds of the U.S. L/RC dialogue in which the fathers are used jointly to construct histories that will serve as historical background for the ecumenical argument of each round.

*L/RC II – One Baptism for the Remission of Sins* (1966)

L/RC II followed quickly on from L/RC I, only months later. The dialogue members met for three days, February 10-13, 1966, to discuss the creedal phrase, “one baptism for the remission of sins.” Since the first round had been on the Nicene Creed as dogma for the church, a subject both churches hold with common regard, the dialogue decided to take up another subject about which there is “substantial agreement.” Since this was only the second set of conversations, the goals were largely exploratory; the two sides examined the topic together and learned from each other how each tradition approached it, both conceptually and terminologically. There was not yet any real sense of trying to come to convergence, consensus, or agreement. There was also no agenda for creating any kind of common statement that might either address divergence or

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disagreement, or offer any recommendations to the two churches. The procedural method was a simple one: two papers were prepared, each by a Lutheran and a Catholic, on their representative interpretations of the New Testament views on baptism and on their respective church’s traditional teaching about baptism. After the ensuing discussions, a Lutheran and a Catholic each produced a summary of the main points of the conversations over the three days.

Given the scale of the process, it might seem that the church fathers would not play a very significant role, and this is true to the extent that the kind of substantial historical examination found in later rounds is lacking here. Nevertheless, the fathers do appear and play a part in the historical background of the larger theological points being addressed. Even so, while the fathers are not used programmatically in the sense that they are not part of an intentionally more expansive presentation of the historical background of the subject, they are used more selectively to construct the patristic history surrounding baptismal practice and teaching.

There are three instances of the fathers in L/RC II as they are used to construct such a history, one which shows how Lutheran and Catholic practices and teachings are congruent with the early church. First, L/RC II uses Tertullian to formulate a history of the early date at which infant baptism was occurring as an ecclesial practice. Second, L/RC II uses Augustine to fashion a history of the crucial development of theological assessment of baptism, one that raises the question of the fate of those unbaptized. And finally, L/RC II constructs a history of the Reformers and Trent to establish that both sides placed importance on the early church in making their cases.
Since both Lutherans and Catholics practice infant baptism, it became a natural point of ecumenical discussion. The theological issue at stake has to do with how to account for this practice, since there is no clear mandate in Scripture for it. This raises connected issues, such as the authority of the church and its teaching office in relation to the development of ecclesial practices. In the summary statements from both Warren Quanbeck (Lutheran) and Joseph Baker (Catholic), the historical evidence for the early dating of infant baptism comes from Tertullian (c.160-c.225).\(^{358}\) The reference in the dialogue is spare, lacking any specific text. However, the source seems to be Tertullian’s *On Baptism* 18, where he writes:

> God’s good pleasure sends as herald its own privileges: any request can both disappoint and be disappointed. It follows that deferment of baptism is more profitable, in accordance with each person’s character and attitude, and even age: and especially to as regards children … It is true our Lord says, *Forbid them not to come to me.* So let them come, when they are growing up, when they are learning, when they are being taught what they are coming to: let them be made Christians when they have become competent to know Christ. Why should innocent infancy come with haste to the remission of sins? Shall we take less cautious action in this than we take in worldly matters? Shall one who is not trusted with earthly property be entrusted with heavenly? Let them first learn how to ask for salvation, so that you may be seen to have given to one that asketh … All who understand what a burden baptism is will have more fear of obtaining it than of its postponement. Faith unimpaired has no doubt of its salvation.”\(^{359}\)

The evidence from this passage is negative; that is, Tertullian is writing to argue against infant baptism, thereby implicitly acknowledging that it was a practice at least in Carthage. While L/RC II only mentions Tertullian as historical support for the early dating of infant baptism, there are other sources, ones which speak favorably of the practice. Among them is Irenaeus of Lyons (c.130-c.220), who in his *Adversus Haereses*

\(^{358}\) L/RC II, 72 and 81.
2.22 speaks about “infants and little children” being baptized receiving salvation from God.\footnote{Adversus Haereses 2.22.4 reads, “In fact, he came to save all men through himself: all, I mean, who through him are reborn into God, infants and children and young men and elders.” Irenaeus of Lyons, ed. and trans. by Robert M. Grant (New York: Routledge, 1997), 114.} Another source is the *Apostolic Tradition* 21.4 (c.215) of Hippolytus of Rome which, in giving instruction for the rite of baptism in the Easter Vigil, admonishes that the children come forward first, and that for those children who cannot answer for themselves due to age shall have their parents or someone else from their family answer for them.\footnote{See the recent *The Apostolic Tradition*, translated by Paul F. Bradshaw, Maxwell E. Johnson, and L. Edward Phillips, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 112.} Thus we have evidence from three places (Carthage, Lyons, and Rome) at the beginning of the third century that infant baptism was being practiced. Therefore, there is even more patristic evidence than provided in L/RC II that could have been used to show how Lutheran and Roman Catholic practices are congruent with the early church.

The second manner in which L/RC II uses the fathers is to construct a history of baptism’s relationship to the development of theology regarding sin, in particular original sin. As Raymond Brown notes in a study of baptism in the New Testament, “we should be careful to avoid interpreting NT thought on the necessity of baptism in the light of the later (Augustinian) problematic, for the NT does not speculate on the fate of the unbaptized.”\footnote{Raymond E. Brown, S.S., “One Baptism for the Remission of Sins – New Testament Roots,” L/RC II, 16.} In a related passage he notes, “in general the NT is describing adult baptism and the remission of actual sins. As we have insisted, the remission of original sin does not seem to be in focus.”\footnote{Brown, L/RC II, 18.} Here L/RC II is making reference to Augustine, or at least an Augustinian line of thought, in order to trace a key distinction in understanding the phrase “remission of sin,” the subject of the dialogue.
The third way L/RC II fashions a history concerning the church fathers is when it examines the Lutheran documents of the Reformation and the Catholic canons of Trent. The Lutheran Arthur Carl Piepkorn and the Catholic Godfrey Diekmann each refers to the fathers in the texts of Luther and Trent as a way to corroborate the patristic intent of both, meaning that both Luther and Trent intended to utilize the fathers as opposed to medieval scholasticism in showing the efficacy of baptism for the forgiveness of sin. Piepkorn points out that the Apology to the Augsburg Confession of Philip Melanchthon refers to Augustine when defending the objective validity of the sacraments. Piepkorn writes:

A properly administered sacrament is always and unfailingly a divinely valid offer of grace. This fact is utterly independent of the faith of the recipient. But the offer becomes effective, the communication of grace actually takes place, the sacrament is used fruitfully, only when there is a right motus, that is faith in the proffer of grace, in the user’s heart. The Lutheran Reformers felt that they could appeal to St. Augustin’s [sic] on this point: “Aut Augustinus ut fides sacramenti non sacramentum justificet.”

The Latin is translated, “Augustine says … faith in the sacrament, not the sacrament, justifies.” As Piepkorn notes, this is a paraphrased reference to Augustine’s Tractates on the Gospel of John 80.3.2, wherein he claims, “Whence is this power of water of such magnitude that it touches the body and yet washes clean the heart, except from the word’s effecting it, not because it is said, but because it is believed?” The point is that the Reformers were arguing against scholastic formulations regarding the efficacy of the

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364 The reader will recall that this is the one minor use of the fathers enumerated above in the introduction to this chapter.
sacrament, as we saw in the chapter above on the sixteenth century, by referring back to the fathers. Piepkorn is both noting the historical setting of the Apology and how it helps to constitute a Lutheran view of baptism.

In a comparable vein, Diekmann notes the historical situation of the Council of Trent on just this very issue of the efficacy of the sacrament. In describing the mindset of the Council, Diekmann writes, “the Council had repeatedly expressed its determination not to employ scholastic terminology, but to restrict itself whenever possible to modes of expression derived from scripture, early apostolic tradition and the Fathers.”

Notwithstanding, as Diekmann explains, there were two problems, one a lack of clarity about and one a divergence from this intent. The murkiness came over the question of how baptism participates in the cause of justification. Trent held that baptism was the instrumental cause of justification, “the sacrament of faith;” without it, none is justified. And for the adult, there was a necessary personal faith. The difficulty arose when discerning where the faith resided. The Council had at least three options before it: faith as a preliminary condition for baptism, faith as the habitus fidei whereby faith is infused at baptism, or faith as that faith of the church as mother who expresses this faith through the baptismal rite itself. According to Diekmann, “Cardinal Cervini, that papal legate who played the leading role at these sessions of the Council, in presenting the text made it clear that this last-mentioned, more ancient, understanding was intended by the expression ‘sacrament of faith.’”

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368 Godfrey Diekmann, “Some Observations on the Teaching of Trent concerning Baptism” L/RC II, 62. Diekmann repeats this point later when he writes, “[Trent was] determined to take advantage of the insights furnished by the scholastics, where these proved helpful, but not … to use scholastic terminology where it could be avoided in favor of biblical and patristic language” (66).

The divergence from the intent of the Council to use biblical and patristic language in lieu of scholastic terminology appeared in the discussion at Trent of the sacraments in themselves and their efficacy. The example Diekmann cites is the replacement of the phrase, “‘the sacraments confer grace on those who receive them worthily’ (rite et digne suscipientibus) … by ‘on those who place no obstacle’ (non ponentibus obicem).” The first phrase was borrowed from the Decretum pro Armenis of the Council of Florence (1439), and “suggests positive dispositions on the part of the recipient (which would include faith in the case of baptism); whereas non ponentibus obicem has in fact been understood all too widely in post-Tridentine Catholic theology in the merely negative sense of absence of mortal sin.” Diekmann’s point is to buttress the argument that the more patristic view and phrasing would have gone much further in ameliorating the divided relationships between the Catholics and the Reformers than the scholastic view and phrasing. The fathers are being used to show the efficacy of infant baptism and how both Reformers and Catholics hold to this point.

In summary, L/RC II has an historical use of the church fathers, one that uses the fathers to construct histories surrounding baptism, histories which Lutherans and Catholics agree upon. Those who presented distillations of the conversations which emerged in response to the presented essays remarked that Tertullian was used to substantiate the early dating of infant baptism, which both Lutherans and Catholics practice. Augustine was cited, in a somewhat cursory fashion, to note the historical rise and progression of the notion of original sin. Finally, the fathers were mentioned in the

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context of the Reformation debates over the issue of the sacraments in general, a topic we explored in a previous chapter.\footnote{Since the main focus of L/RC II was to address baptism in the context of the creedal phrase “one baptism for the remission of sins,” there were many aspects of baptism that went untapped. Indeed, Raymond Brown makes passing reference to this at the very end of his essay when discussing many other aspects to baptism in the New Testament besides the remission of sins, namely, “the earnest of the Spirit, adoption as sons, participation in the Christian covenant, membership in the church, union with other Christians, etc.” (“One Baptism for the Remission of Sins – New Testament Roots,” L/RC II, 21). This coupled with Krister Stendahl’s comments, “the fact that baptism in the NT and in the early church is always an act of \textit{initiation}, and that this fact should be the point of departure,” serves to highlight the central purpose of baptism (“The Focal Point of the New Testament Baptismal Teachings,” L/RC II, 24). In Stendahl’s words, other motifs of baptism can “condition and enrich, but never overshadow the rite of \textit{initiation}” (Ibid., 26). This initiatory element of baptism denotes that the baptized is baptized into Christ and thereby his church. All other motifs, including “remission of sins,” are derivative.}

L/RC II used the church fathers in order to construct histories as background to its ecumenical work. It was not necessary that this be the case. It could have approached the topic differently, placing the fathers in the ecumenical argument itself, as well as in the historical background. This would have shown the variety of ways ecumenical dialogue partners have used the fathers, as well as how they could have had (and may still have) more of an impact for the L/RC.

Two sources will illustrate how this might be so. Both of these examples relate the topic for the dialogue round (in the case of L/RC II, baptism) to the church, something we will see done in many more rounds in the next chapter. This exploration of these two sources will show how the fathers could have made more of an impact on the L/RC dialogue. When the fathers are brought into the ecumenical argument of a dialogue they make a difference because they almost inevitably relate whatever the dialogue topic is (in this case, baptism) to the life and structure of the church. And it is just this life and structure of the church that is the ecumenical sticking point on the way to unity.
First, the German Lutheran-Catholic dialogue *Communio Sanctorum: The Church as the Communion of Saints* (2004) sets its discussion of the sacraments squarely in the context of communion ecclesiology, claiming, “In the sacraments, the relation to communion is expressed in a specific way. This can be seen above all in that, according to the New Testament, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper effect membership in the body of Christ and growth in him.” While *Communio Sanctorum* does not treat baptism in any full way, it does at least set it within the context of ecclesiology, to be sure, *communion* ecclesiology that, as we saw in earlier chapters, is dependent upon the church fathers. In this way the possibilities are opened up for the use of the fathers in a construction of an ecumenical argument from both sides and for the sake of ecumenical relationship and commitment.

Second, Susan Wood takes on the larger complex of questions in her essay, “Baptism and the Foundations of Communion.” The set of questions Wood poses sets the theological landscape for beginning to view the interrelation of baptism to communion ecclesiology, and allows for patristic considerations. First, Wood asks, “into

373 *Communio Sanctorum: The Church as the Communion of Saints*, Bilateral Working Group of the German National Bishops’ Conference and the Church Leadership of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany, trans. Mark W. Jeske, Michael Root, and Daniel R. Smith (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2004), 26. As a joint statement, this dialogue also states, “Baptism and the Lord’s Supper stand out because of their fundamental significance for the reception of salvation and for membership in the body of Christ” (28). Similarly, the international Lutheran-Catholic document *Church and Justification* states, “Baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19) leads us into communion with the triune God and into sharing in his blessings and thus also knits believers together into a communion. Baptism is calling and election by God and makes us God’s possession: thus also creating the community of those who are called and chosen, ‘God’s own people’ (1 Pet 2:9). In baptism we are baptized into Christ's body, partaking of his death and resurrection, and putting on Christ: consequently the baptized also constitute ‘one body...one with another’(Rom 12:4 f.) and are one communion in whichcreaturely and social divisions no longer count for anything (cf. Gal 3:26-28). The baptized receive the Holy Spirit: they are thus also bound together into one communion ‘in the one Spirit’ (1 Cor 12:12 f.; Eph 4:3 f.)” *Church and Justification*, in *Growth in Agreement II*, ed. Jeffrey Gros, Harding Meyer, William G. Rusch (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 503-4.

what are we baptized? Christ or the church or both? How are they related? Are we baptized into the universal church of Christ or a local church, a church of Christ which transcends separated ecclesial communities, or are we baptized into confessional denominations?375 Second, “is it possible to consider baptism as the foundation of Christian unity in isolation from a unified rite of Christian initiation which includes baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist?”376 As Wood herself notes, in the early church, baptism was the sacrament that brought believers directly to the Eucharist.377 In this way, the ecclesial setting of baptism was unavoidable. Indeed, baptism was the entrance into that space where the practice of the Eucharist took place. If the Lutheran/Catholic dialogue (or any other, for that matter) was able to recapture the seminal connection between baptism and the Eucharist that was expressed in the early church, it might be able to learn from the early church how to express unity in some simultaneous manner through both sacramental celebrations of baptism and Eucharist, since both of these exhibit the one church.

L/RC VII – Justification by Faith (1985)

As we saw in the chapter above on the use of the church fathers in the Reformation, the issue of justification was a particularly sixteenth-century one. In that

377 Wood, “Baptism and the Foundations,” 53-56. Stuart G. Hall also notes the reality of the ancient church. In describing the rite of baptism given to us by Hippolytus, Hall says, “After bathing, the candidate is anointed with ‘oil of thanksgiving’, an oil scented and blessed for the purpose, dried and clothed in clean robes, and taken to the bishop in the presence of the congregation. The bishop anoints the candidate again, signs him with the cross, and blesses and kisses him; a eucharistic meal follows, at which the newly baptized have a privileged place.” See his essay, “Ministry, Worship and Christian Life,” in Early Christianity: Origins and Evolution to A.D. 600, ed. Ian Haslett (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 101-11, at 103.
century both sides appealed directly to the fathers. In the Augsburg Confession (CA) and Melanchthon’s Apology the Reformers were defending their views of justification against charges that it was dependent upon a christological basis that was somehow new and deviant. The Catholic response to the CA was just along these lines, using the church fathers as proof that the Reformers’ views were distorted. The onus was on the Reformers to show that their views and formulations were indeed in line with the church fathers and the canons of ancient church councils. Trent elucidated the dual formulation of Scripture and tradition, and this formulation subsumed the church fathers into the authority of the church hierarchy, as they were expressions of the living tradition that assembled the Scriptures themselves. (Indeed, since the first official church-wide list of canonical books of Scripture was pronounced at Trent, the Tridentine fathers saw themselves as continuing this authority of tradition.)

Martin Chemnitz was keen to critique the various uses of the term ‘tradition’ to further defend the ways in which the Lutheran Church was truly in line with authoritative tradition. Here Chemnitz used the fathers directly in his argument with the Council of Trent to expound how the Lutheran Church admits and adheres to the distinction between Tradition, i.e., doctrine that is unchangeable, and traditions, i.e., those customs of humans which may be altered. In this way, Chemnitz argued that the Lutheran Church’s view of justification was indeed a valid expression of doctrine, one which has inhered within the Tradition of the church since the first centuries.

If the fathers were used expressly in the arguments between the Reformers and Catholics in the sixteenth century, they were not so used in L/RC VII. Rather they were used as part of the joint presentation of the history of the theologies of and debates over
justification. To be sure, this joint presentation is an intentional part of the Common Statement from L/RC VII. Here the fathers are used to construct the story of “how disagreements over justification that were once irresolvable may now not be church-dividing.” However, the fathers are not used by L/RC VII in the constructive theological argument of the dialogue, wherein the assessment is that the present-day views of justification by Lutherans and Roman Catholics need not be church-dividing.

L/RC VII uses the fathers to construct a history of the development of the doctrine of justification as historical background to the constructive ecumenical argument it produces. The following explains that argument, for the benefit of the reader. L/RC VII culminates with two sets of convergences, neither of which is based on any use of the fathers. The first describes how the doctrine of justification can be used as the criterion by which “to test the practices, structures, and theologies of the church” and note how “they help or hinder the proclamation of God’s free and merciful promises in Christ Jesus which can be rightly received only through faith.” As Robert Jenson writes, “This doctrine describes nothing at all, neither God’s justice nor the process of our becoming just. It is instead an instruction to those who would audibly or visibly speak the gospel, a rule for preachers, teachers, liturgists, and confessors.” That justification could be used as the ultimate criterion for assessing church practice, structure, and theology is alien to the fathers, so naturally they would not be useful in coming to such a

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378 Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VII: Justification by Faith, eds. H. George Anderson, T. Austin Murphy, and Joseph A. Burgess (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985), 17.
379 L/RC VII, 69.
convergence. This is to say that the meaning of justification-as-criterion was not suggested by any of the fathers and is a construal emanating from the sixteenth century.

The second set of convergences L/RC VII calls “material convergences”; that is, those “fundamental convictions regarding justification and faith” that Lutherans and Catholics share.381 This set of convergences does indeed describe something; it describes a number of elements that Lutherans and Catholics can hold in common when talking about God’s justice and the activity by which believers themselves become just. However, these elements were not arrived at by the Lutheran and Catholic members of the L/RC hashing out an agreed upon interpretation of Augustine or the proper Augustinian position. Indeed as L/RC VII states, “It must be emphasized that our common affirmation that it is God in Christ alone whom believers ultimately trust does not necessitate any one particular way of conceptualizing or picturing God’s saving work.”382 So, since the dialogue did not have a discussion over how to understand and interpret the fathers (in this case, Augustine), the church fathers were not used as part of the argument.

My examination will focus on three particular areas of L/RC VII that use the fathers to formulate histories: the Common Statement itself and two background essays, one by Robert B. Eno (a Catholic) on the particularly Western patristic views of justification and one by William G. Rusch (a Lutheran) on the particularly Eastern patristic views. L/RC VII treats justification in some isolation from its relationship to the church, leaving fairly untouched the Reformation injunction that it is the article by which

381 L/RC VII, 70.
382 L/RC VII, 72.
the church stands or falls.  This is not necessarily a negative critique of L/RC VII. My only point is that by addressing the relationship between the church and justification the church fathers may come to be useful sources in the ecumenical arguments constructed to overcome remaining differences. This was the case largely due to the importance of communion ecclesiology and its own references to patristic sources. Indeed, this is just the thinking of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops when they state:

> With due respect we note the possibility that the sixth divisive issue, on justification as the ‘criterion of authenticity’ (nos. 117-20), may well point to a profound ecclesiological difference between Catholics and Lutherans. It could be that our different concepts of Church are not reconcilable simply by the mutual recognition of the legitimacy of each other’s religious concerns and thought-patterns. Despite the use of different norms for assessing aspects of the Church’s life (nos. 117-18), we believe that a significant degree of agreement can be reached in ecclesiology.

In contrast to what L/RC VII accomplished I will compare L/RC VII to the international Lutheran-Catholic dialogue “Church and Justification,” to show how the fathers may appear in the ecumenical arguments constructed to address the importance of justification for the current life of the church. To the greatest degree, the figure and thought of Augustine and his disagreements with Pelagius were the factors involved in marking the differences between Lutherans and Catholics on justification. L/RC VII recognizes that these differences cannot be resolved simply by attempting a common

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383 L/RC VII accomplished much in exploring the historical data of interpretation of Scriptural texts regarding justification and proposes a very helpful set of criteria by which Lutherans and Catholics may now work on such interpretation so as to overcome any remaining differences. It would have been too much for L/RC VII to do what was done in “Church and Justification.”


interpretation of Augustine himself, since there have been so many versions of this
Pelagian controversy. The Common Statement claims:

the late medieval scene was thus characterized by a bewildering variety in which
Augustinian intentions combined with competing interests arising out of an
emphasis on the power and freedom of human nature within the order established
by God. Everyone professed to be Augustinian and anti-Pelagian, but there was
little agreement on what these terms meant.\textsuperscript{386}

In many and (as the dialogue itself argues) legitimate ways, the Common Statement’s
description can be applied to the Lutherans and Catholics of L/RC VII; both claim to be
Augustinian and anti-Pelagian.

We will look at some examples of how L/RC VII uses Augustine from the West
and some of the fathers from the East to construct the history for how this multiplicity of
Augustinian and anti-Pelagian views came to be. At the outset, L/RC VII notes “the
degree to which the debate over justification in the sixteenth century was conditioned by
a specifically Western and Augustinian understanding of the context of salvation which,
in reliance on St. Paul, stressed the scriptural theme of \textit{iustitia}, of righteousness.”\textsuperscript{387} In
contrast, the eastern fathers came to view salvation as a cosmic process with humanity in
a special place, a process that may be analogized and understood in a myriad of ways.
Indeed, as L/RC VII stresses, “Not only did Augustine emphasize Paul’s teaching on
justification much more than was common in the East, but he understood this primarily in
terms of the transformation of the individual, as suggested by the Latin etymology of the
term \textit{justificare}, to make righteous.”\textsuperscript{388}

\textsuperscript{386} L/RC VII, 21.
\textsuperscript{387} L/RC VII, 17.
\textsuperscript{388} L/RC VII, 18.
The citation given (in the footnotes) at this point in the Common Statement is from Augustine’s *The Spirit and the Letter* 26.45, which reads, “What else, after all, does *justified* (Rom 3:24) mean but: made righteous by the one, of course, *who justifies sinners* (Rom 4:5), so that from sinner they become righteous?”* The Spirit and the Letter* was written early in the controversy with Pelagius (412) and argues for a transformationist view of justification. By “transformationist view” L/RC VII means that justification is a process through which the believer is ontologically changed. The citation within the quotation above comes toward the end of Augustine’s work and at a particular point in the argument. After expounding his argument about God’s grace and its power over sinful humanity, using a transformationist image of the sinful human being cured of the sickness of sin through the new covenant, Augustine addresses objections. The first objection provides the reason for the citation above. It is that even Paul himself claims, “Gentiles do by nature the things contained in the Law” (Rom. 2:14). How is one to make sense of this “by nature?” Augustine claims in *The Spirit and the Letter* 26.44 that an answer is that the Gentiles referred to are Christian converts whose ‘nature’ is now their humanity restored to grace. This is the kind of righteousness he means in the citation above.

However, one of the main points of the construction of the patristic history in L/RC VII is to highlight that there was a complex of ways Augustine explained his views

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on justification over his long career.\textsuperscript{390} Moreover, add to this the many ways Augustine was interpreted in the centuries to follow him, and we arrive at this from L/RC VII:

While Augustine’s stress on the absolute priority of God’s initiative and the primacy of grace was often reiterated, his transformationist model of justification, when set within the context of new developments in intellectual outlook, church practice, and spirituality, allowed for growing speculation about the human role in the process.\textsuperscript{391}

Two citations from Augustine are key to explaining the development of Augustine’s thought, one concerning grace and the other concerning merit, and are used here to justify L/RC VII’s own stance on how the history of the doctrine of justification is a complex and evolving subject.

On the issue of grace, the Common Statement states, “Augustine’s intention in developing the doctrine of grace was to protect that absolute priority of God’s action over all human endeavor.”\textsuperscript{392} The reference is to Augustine’s “On the Predestination of the Saints,” written sometime after 427 wherein he critiques some of his own earlier views on grace and its relationship to love. Although Augustine defends “the priority of God’s activity over human endeavor,” the cited text from “On the Predestination of the Saints” 3.7 exhibits a transformationist formulation of this point. Augustine corrects an earlier view of his in which he contended that the faith whereby believers believe was not a gift from God preceded by God’s grace, but rather something inherent to humans by which humans are able to respond to the gospel. He emends this view by arguing, “both [faith and love]… are ours on account of the choice of the will, and yet both, nonetheless, are

\textsuperscript{390} Part of the Reformation project was to recover aspects of Augustine that were contrary to the transformationist view of justification which had come to prominence in the Middle Ages. However, as the Reformation controversy itself showed, the resolution to the issue of justification is not to read Augustine against himself until one version wins out over another.

\textsuperscript{391} L/RC VII, 18.

\textsuperscript{392} L/RC VII, 18.
given by the Spirit of faith and of love.” Following this, he claims, “Both [faith and love] are due to him [God] because he prepares the will, and both are due to us because they are not done unless we are willing.” L/RC VII cites this passage from the later more mature Augustine, not to use as support in the ecumenical argument arrived at, but as evidence of how the history of justification is complex and evolving, even in the lifetime of the preeminent church father on the subject.

The second citation from Augustine concerns the issue of merit, touched on above. L/RC VII claims, “Augustine took the term from the African tradition. For him it had its basis in the biblical language of reward, but again the mature Augustine wanted to vindicate God’s absolute priority: ‘When God rewards our merits, he crowns his own gifts.’” The reference is to one of Augustine’s abundant letters (Epistle 194 written in 418), this one to a priest named Sixtus in which Augustine presented his views on grace with such sharpness that it might appear to border on a predestinarianism that determined a person’s destiny without any involvement by him or her. The quotation from L/RC VII comes from a longer passage:

What merit, then, does a human being have before grace so that by that merit he may receive grace, since only grace produces in us every good merit of ours and since, when God crowns our merits, he only crowns his own gifts? For, just as we have obtained mercy from the very beginning of faith, not because we were believers but in order that we might be believers, so in the end, when there will be

394 “Predestination” 3.7, Answer to the Pelagians IV, 153-4.
395 Indeed, L/RC VII also notes, “[Augustine’s] distinctions between ‘operating’ and ‘cooperating,’ ‘preventient’ and ‘subsequent’ grace point” in the direction of defending the priority of God’s grace in ways that were quickly taken up in following generations and centuries, taken up and manipulated especially in scholastic ways in the medieval period.
396 L/RC VII, 19.
eternal life, he will crown us, as scripture says, *in compassion and mercy* (Ps 103:4).  

L/RC VII here uses Augustine again to illustrate how much the issue of justification was itself transformed both in the thought of that father himself and in subsequent centuries. But Augustine was not the first to deal with these issues, as if there was a dearth of theological inquiry on the various issues surrounding justification. Indeed, Robert B. Eno’s background essay to the Common Statement, “Some Patristic Views on the Relationship of Faith and Works in Justification” describes Augustine as carrying on from a number of other church fathers who dealt in various contexts (such as the Gnostic and Marcionite debates) with faith and works, grace and Christian life. In Eno’s estimation, the underlying trend of thought is that fathers like Origen and Ambrosiaster – and even Pelagius – assented to some form or another of unmerited grace for prebaptismal justification. The difficulty lies in their views of *postbaptismal* justification. Eno sums up his findings:

This survey of the Fathers points in particular to one significant issue: the distinction between first and subsequent justification, or between justification and sanctification … A closer look at the patristic data shows that most of the Fathers looked upon the old law as still in effect except for the specific ceremonial, dietary, and other regulations rejected by Gentile Christians almost from the beginning. Gospel as faith meant simply accepting Christianity as opposed to Judaism or paganism. In some texts faith was even more clearly taken in a sense of what later theology would call the *fides quae* [i.e., the faith which is believed, or the content of faith, as distinguished from the faith by which one believes].  

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At the end of his essay, Eno marks Augustine as foremost of these fathers when he writes, “Augustine, to be sure, among others, insists on the ongoing necessity of divine grace for all good actions subsequent to justification.”

As the Western fathers were taking up the topic of salvation in terms of Pauline iustitia, L/RC VII notes, “Eastern theologians, on the other hand, generally saw salvation within the framework of a cosmic process in which humanity occupies a place of honor.” L/RC VII only brings up the difference between the West and the East to highlight the fact that the Reformation debates over justification were a particularly Western phenomenon, being the effect of centuries of interpretations of Augustinian thought on grace. In the East, however, the predominant view of salvation was expressed in terms of divinization, or theosis. Making use of the Neo-Platonic views of the ascent of the soul, Eastern theology “described human salvation in terms of a return to God of a creation that had gone forth from God.”

William G. Rusch’s background essay to L/RC VII served the purpose of exploring the various ways in which the Eastern fathers understood what the Western church meant by justification. While the notion of theosis was dominant, it was not pervasive, nor was it alone. Salvation in the Eastern fathers was also variously explained with vibrant imagery, including healing, the forgiveness of sins, illumination, and purification. As Rusch explains, “The Eastern Fathers did not have an interest in building these various images into a systematic

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400 L/RC VII, 17.
401 L/RC VII, 17.
In his final assessment, Rusch stresses that while there are connections between the East and the West and some of the ideas used to express their theologies of salvation (for instance, even Augustine was not unaware of *theosis*), he acknowledges the characteristically sixteenth-century concerns over justification were neither engendered nor addressed by Eastern patristic thought. While this is the case, I have included this summary of Rusch’s study because it helps to sharpen the history of justification that L/RC VII constructed: it is not a history of the whole church, but of the Western church as it developed in different ways from the Eastern.

As mentioned above, the fathers are used to construct the history of the development of the Augustinian notion of justification in L/RC VII and thus not used in its ecumenical argument. Moreover, L/RC VII does not relate the subject of justification directly to the life, nature, or purpose of the church. However, less than a decade after L/RC VII, the international Lutheran-Catholic dialogue’s *Church and Justification* asked the question directly, “whether the Lutheran doctrine of justification diminishes the reality of the church; whether the Catholic understanding of the church obscures the gospel as it is explicated by the doctrine of justification.”

Unlike in L/RC VII, the church fathers appear as authoritative (briefly) at several points in the argument of *Church and Justification*, and not simply as historical background material that would explain the complexity of the history of justification. As one example, in describing the church as ‘creature of the gospel,’ *Church and Justification* refers to the “common conviction [between Lutherans and Catholics] that

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405 *Church and Justification* (Wurzburg, Germany, 11 September 1993) §173, GiA II, 527.
the apostolic witness is the normative origin of the church.” In defense of this view Irenaeus and Augustine are cited. The reference to Irenaeus is to his Against the Heresies 3.1.1, “We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation, than from those [i.e., the apostles] through whom the gospel has come down to us.” And the reference to Augustine is to his On Baptism 4.31, “What the whole church believes is wholly rightly believed, even if it has not been directly decided by councils, but has been transmitted only on apostolic authority as belonging to the unquestioned substance of the faith.

The point for us to consider here is that Church and Justification does in fact use the fathers as part of the ecumenical argument, indeed to buttress the argument that the witness of the apostles shaped the foundational identity of the church. It is important to note, however, that Church and Justification uses the fathers when the subject of the church is discussed, not justification. Of the two senses of justification considered, first as the means of salvation and the communication of God’s righteousness and second as the criterion by which all other theology is judged, Church and Justification makes clear that it is taking up the latter. So it concludes, “Therefore the doctrine of the church must correspond to justification as criterion.” Indeed, three recent essays provide further evidence that the fathers would not be rightly used as a part of an ecumenical argument on justification, not least because there are a myriad senses of that term both between

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406 Church and Justification §47, GiA II, 498.
407 Church and Justification §45, GiA II, 498.
409 Apparently this is an original translation for Church and Justification from the Latin, “Quod universa tenet ecclesia, nec conciliis institutum sed semper retentum est nonnisi authoritate apostolica traditum rectissime creditur,” as cited in the footnote.
410 Church and Justification §167, GiA II, 526.
various church fathers and within their own thought over time, but also because there is no evidence that justification was conceived in any way as the kind of criterion of all other aspects of the church’s theology until the Reformation. 411

L/RC VIII – *The One Mediator, the Saints and Mary* (1992)

If the use of the fathers in L/RC VII, on justification, is to construct a history which helps explain the sixteenth-century debates over justification as the criterion by which “to test all other practices, structures, and theologies of the church,” then the historical use of the fathers in L/RC VIII, *The One Mediator, the Saints and Mary*, is to construct a history to serve as background for some particular practices and theologies in the present, namely those centered on the saints and Mary. 412 By intent, L/RC VIII makes explicit use of justification as such a criterion to test some of the “material convergences” assembled in L/RC VII by means of examining the teachings about and practices involving the saints and Mary. By and large, the patristic history L/RC VIII fashions has to deal first with the practices of early Christians regarding the saints and Mary before the teachings because that is how the matter developed; believers began to take part in practices before the church pronounced teachings on those practices.

The subject matter of L/RC VIII is, in one sense, more complex than that of L/RC VII, because it takes up not only the practices that arose regarding the saints and Mary but also the theologies that pertained to them. In the end, after a good deal of work in


delineating the “issues and perspectives,” the dialogue comes to recommend that “greater progress toward fellowship” may occur:

1. if Lutheran churches could acknowledge that the Catholic teaching about the saints and Mary as set forth in the documents of Vatican Council II does not promote idolatrous belief or practice and is not opposed to the gospel; and
2. if the Catholic Church could acknowledge that, in a closer and still incomplete fellowship, Lutherans, focusing on Christ the one Mediator, as set forth in Scripture, would not be obliged to invoke the saints or to affirm the two Marian dogmas.413

This would seem to disappoint anyone looking for positive and forward-moving ecumenical work on these issues. It does, however, follow on a straightforward, though obscured statement from just a few pages earlier when it is confessed, “[t]his dialogue has not reached agreement on the substantive issue whether invocation of the saints is legitimate and beneficial.”414 These conclusions seem to say that the Lutheran and Catholic positions have simply been more fully explained one to another and received graciously by each.415

L/RC VIII had set out to use the case of the saints and Mary as a test for some of the convergences reached in L/RC VII, on justification. The saints and Mary are then viewed primarily as a sixteenth-century problem and thus the use of the church fathers naturally falls into the realm of constructing history. The fathers serve as precursors, as part of the trajectory that led eventually to the differences which came in the Reformation and thus L/RC VIII does not hold them as material (textual or historical) that can be used

413 L/RC VIII, 62.
414 L/RC VIII, 57.
415 A Lutheran response to L/RC VII is Max Johnson’s “The One Mediator, the Saints, and Mary: A Lutheran Reflection,” Worship 67 (May 1993): 226-38. Johnson says, “[w]ith all due respect to the participants of this round of bilateral dialogues, their results are rather puzzling. Is this all that can be hoped for from the past almost thirty years of American Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue in general and the past ten years on this issue alone…?” (226). Johnson goes on to lament the absence of any “challenge … as to whether or not the invocation of Mary and the saints might have something positive to contribute to liturgical, ecclesial, and spiritual life” (227).
in the ecumenical argument. The Common Statement explores the history of the three main logical subtopics of L/RC VIII: the intercession of saints, the invocation of saints, and the particular expressions of these factors for Mary.

It is an important point that while the church fathers are not used in any way in the argument of the ecumenical convergences arrived at in L/RC VIII, the fact that they are presented in the historical background section of the Common Statement from the round is significant. Robert Eno makes the following telling comments on the cult of the saints:

Catholics and Protestants have long argued whether this cult is a development with pagan roots, a recrudescence of a human tendency that refused to die, a pagan spirit that simply, all too quickly, re-appeared in superficially Christian garb. Catholics have tended to argue that, pagan roots or no, devotion to the martyrs, and then by extension to other types of saints, is an understandable and not intrinsically objectionable growth. Despite superficial similarities, its spirit is quite different from that of real or alleged pagan parallels.416

While Eno was a member of L/RC VIII these comments do not come from a background essay to L/RC VIII but from another work written before L/RC VIII’s publication. Nevertheless, his comments are telling because in L/RC VIII we have an example of a jointly-presented history of the saints and Mary from the patristic period that does not intentionally demarcate a Lutheran or Catholic view of that history. The data are presented with intellectual integrity, noting the appropriate debates over the history, usually in the footnotes. But the historical survey is presented jointly.

L/RC VIII makes a crucial historical observation early in its examination of the patristic period; it states, “In the history of the first Christian centuries the task of sorting out what was truly compatible with the centrality of Christ and the uniqueness of his

mediatorship in the beliefs and practices surrounding other mediators proved endless.”

This is crucial because it admits the need for a full and balanced examination of the historical data, though what is presented in L/RC VIII is necessarily a compressed, balanced treatment. So, L/RC VIII uses the fathers to construct a history of how the church has understood the mediatorship of Christ and what practices surrounding the saints and Mary were compatible with it.

Regarding the first of L/RC VIII’s subtopics, on intercession, many in the early church believed that the martyrs for the faith would surely be able to intercede with God on behalf of the remaining believers on earth. There was less clarity about those who simply died in the interim before the final coming of Christ. Even so, greatly manifest was the Pauline-shaped eschatological hope that all those who died in the faith, martyr or not, would be accounted as among the church of the saints. Included in the examples from the fathers cited in L/RC VIII are Ignatius of Antioch, who on his way to martyrdom in Rome was eager to be joined with Christ, and the Acts of the Martyrs which is “replete with indications that this very hope [of immediate transition to eternal life with Christ] emboldened persecuted Christians to face martyrdom with calm.”

The conviction that martyred saints were able to intercede for those remaining on earth caused early believers to view the burial site of a martyred saint as a special place for remembrance and worship. L/RC VIII cites the Martyrdom of Polycarp 18.1-3 as among the earliest evidence of this. Early believers did not consider the intercession of those who died but were not martyred, i.e., in an interim state, as a matter of certainty. The

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417 L/RC VIII, 84.
418 L/RC VIII, 86.
general belief in the resurrection, however, provided for the possibility of their intercession.

Regarding the second of L/RC VIII’s subtopics, on invocation, it is belief in the intercession of the saints that allows for belief in their invocation. L/RC VIII states, “Respect for, and veneration of, the saints, burial in the vicinity of their tombs, pilgrimages to the places where they had lived and died or were buried, and adoption of a saint as ‘patron’ of a church or town were practices endorsed and even recommended by some church fathers.” In support of this claim, L/RC VIII refers again to the work of dialogue member Robert Eno. In his study *St. Augustine and the Saints*, Eno writes:

In the later second and early third centuries, we begin to find examples of saintly intercession. Those about to suffer asked others to pray that they would persevere. But more common were instances in which the bystanders asked those about to die to pray for them when they would enter the presence of God.

Regarding the third of L/RC VIII’s subtopics, on Mary, there are two emphases recounted in L/RC VIII; both relate to the importance of Mary and Jesus for one another. First, there was much curiosity about the life of Jesus not recounted in what eventually became the four canonical Gospels, curiosity that caught up Mary in its orbit. As an example of the apocryphal literature that sprang up to service this curiosity, L/RC VIII highlights “the so-called *Protevangelium of James*, written during the late second century, a fanciful account of Jesus’ birth and its prehistory which promoted a high ideal of Christian asceticism by presenting an exalted picture of Mary the Virgin.” Aside from the *Protevangelium*, the main tendency in this apocryphal literature was toward docetism; so an exposition of the real and truly human relationship between Mary and her

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419 L/RC VIII, 86.
420 Eno, *St. Augustine*, 20.
421 L/RC VIII, 87.
son Jesus became central to the defense of the Incarnation. Second, the evolution of orthodox understandings about this proper relationship took place in an environment of tension and ambiguity between popular devotion by lay believers and doctrinal assessment by church leaders. In this setting, the Council of Ephesus (431) actually spurred on a wave of such devotion with its definition and defense of the *Theotokos*.422 While the intercession of Mary was early on believed to be supremely effective, and devotion to her included invocation, even the proponents of the title *Theotokos* and defenders of theologies about Mary’s virginity were not able to come near a “unanimous agreement in the early church as to the implications of her divine motherhood for her own person.”423

In the end, L/RC VIII portrays the patristic period as having brought about a complex of doctrine, beliefs, practices, and theologies about the one mediator, the saints, and Mary. As the Common Statement provides a summary:

At the end of the patristic period the basic soteriological affirmation of Christ’s incarnation, death, and resurrection as the only channel of the divine grace bestowed upon the faithful in the Holy Spirit remained unanimous and unchallenged. At the same time, as examples of holy life multiplied through the growth of the monastic movement, the cult of saints and of Mary continued to expand without arousing a sense of danger for, or rivalry to, the unique

422 L/RC VIII, 88-89. More recent scholarship argues for the Ephesus *Theotokos* to be part of the larger scene of popular religious expression of a wide variety of the earliest Christian believers. So, Max Johnson claims, “we must view what happened after the Council of Ephesus – with the increase of both liturgical and popular Marian piety and devotion, especially in the East, where the Christological focus of *Theotokos* has always remained stronger than in the West – as an evolution in piety and devotion. Such an evolution, I would suggest, is consistent with what came before and was not something radically new, revolutionary, or brought about merely by an elevated Christology. That is, just as it is becoming more common to acknowledge the existence of a higher Christology earlier in the history of the church, so might we note that at least many of the building blocks of a rather full Marian devotion and piety are also and already to be found rather early.” See Maxwell E. Johnson, “Sub Tuum Praesidium: The Theotokos in Christian Life and Worship before Ephesus,” *Pro Ecclesia* 17:1 (2008): 52-75, at 74-5.

423 L/RC VIII, 89.
mediatorship of Christ. But the ambiguity of the competing devotions remained.\textsuperscript{424}

Thus the writings of the church fathers provided evidence of the early growth of the complexity of the issues surrounding the mediatorship of Christ and what might be compatible with it. L/RC VIII used this evidence from the fathers to construct a history of this complexity to serve as historical background for understanding how the ambiguity of competing devotions worked its way into the sixteenth century, eventuating in a rift between the Reformers and the Catholics.

At the same time that L/RC VIII does not use the fathers in its ecumenical argument, it also does not relate the subject matter, the saints and Mary, to the church. This need not have been the case, since the background essays for L/RC VIII offer at least one opportunity for such relating the saints and Mary to the church. John Frederick Johnson’s essay “Mary and the Saints in Contemporary Lutheran Worship” opens a clear avenue for ecumenical travel.\textsuperscript{425} The worship life of the church itself could have been explored much more fruitfully. The use of Mary and the saints in Lutheran worship could have been set along side analogous Catholic use, and both then found to be derivative of or analogous to such use in the early church. Thereby, the two churches could have possibly seen their differences afresh.\textsuperscript{426}

\textsuperscript{424} L/RC VIII, 91.
\textsuperscript{425} John Frederick Johnson, “Mary and the Saints in Contemporary Lutheran Worship,” L/RC VIII, 305-310.
\textsuperscript{426} As an example of a dialogue that has used the fathers in the constructive ecumenical argument, see the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission’s “Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ” found at <http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/angli-comm-docs/pc_chrstuni_doc_20050516_mary-grace-hope-chirst_en.html>, accessed 19 May, 2010. I provide a discussion of this text and its use of the fathers in an excursus at the end of the present chapter.
The list of “Church-Uniting Convergences” from L/RC VIII represents some ecumenical progress, if only by means of definitions; that is, the list clearly lays out what Lutherans and Catholics can say about the terms ‘Mediator’, ‘saint’, ‘intercession’, ‘invocation’, and ‘Mary’ while safeguarding each church’s perspective. But it does so without providing much clear direction whereby the two might learn from one another.427 Making use of the church fathers in the ecumenical argument and relating the subject of devotion to the saints and Mary to ecclesiology could have helped in just this endeavor – the two parties might learn from one another. There is a certain kind of logic to why Lutherans do not engage very much in contemplating the saints and Mary, even though they can defend it as a worthy task. Lutherans’ primary concern with the saints and Mary is the history of cults that surround them, the devotion to them which diverts proper devotion away from the one Mediator, Christ. Because this abuse has happened, Lutherans have typically eschewed involvement in any such devotion themselves, and this has led to something between a paucity and an absence of contemplation. Why ponder a subject which has little to no presence in the life of one’s church? Exposing a way in which devotion to the saints and Mary has to do with the health and well being of the church (in our case, through the church fathers) might have alerted Lutherans to the benefits of such devotion.

427 L/RC VIII, 60-1.
Summation of L/RC II, VII, and VIII:

Using the Fathers Jointly to Construct Histories

In these three rounds we have explored how the L/RC used the fathers together in order to construct histories that will serve as background for the discussions of particular topics. First, the L/RC used the fathers to fashion a common history of ecclesial practice. Thus, L/RC II used Tertullian to establish the early dating of infant baptism, a practice which both Lutherans and Catholics participate in. Likewise, L/RC VIII used the fathers were used to put together a history that told of the various devotional practices surrounding the saints and Mary and how those practices (or modifications of them) tracked through the medieval period into the sixteenth century.

Second, the L/RC used the fathers to construct histories that told of the development of theologies of or doctrines of specific issues. So, L/RC II used Augustine and the reception of his thought to construct a history of the development of the notion of original sin, a notion which L/RC II claims should not be read (historically) back into the Nicene Creed’s phrasing that baptism is for the “remission of sins.” L/RC VII used the fathers to put together a history that illustrates the differences between the East and West in how they thought about justification, and more particularly within the West over divergent understandings of the Augustinian inheritance. And L/RC VIII used the fathers to fashion a history that relates the complex of theological assessments of the devotions to the saints and Mary which grew early in the life of the church and how those devotions are compatible (or not) with the sole mediatorship of Christ. It also tracked these theologies into the sixteenth century.
Lastly, L/RC II constructed a history of the uses of the fathers by the Reformers in their documents and the Catholics at Trent, a history which highlights how both sides were attempting to demonstrate a patristic intent when they wrote about baptism.

These were all jointly constructed histories. That is, both the Lutherans and Catholics produced these histories as ones which were agreeable to both sides. They served as historical background to the constructive ecumenical arguments for these rounds. In each of these cases the L/RC did not relate the subject matter of the dialogue to the nature or structure of the church and so there is no explicit evidence of communion ecclesiology. However, as I suggested above, for L/RC VII and VIII, we may have the situation where communion ecclesiology is *implicit*. In other words, the L/RC, by the time these rounds came along, was operating with a sense of how communion ecclesiology (having risen to prominence by the 1980s) had opened new possibilities for how each church could view the other. This is to say that communion ecclesiology was in the background and helped the L/RC to dialogue about justification and the saints and Mary.

In the next section, we will see how there was one round of the L/RC that did not use the church fathers ‘jointly’ when constructing the history of the dialogue round’s topic, but instead yielded differing understandings of how to understand the patristic history.

*Differing Uses of the Fathers in Constructing History*

L/RC I (published in 1965), on the Nicene Creed as dogma of the church, is the one dialogue round where the Lutherans and Catholics read the church fathers as
historical background differently from one another. This first round takes up creedal formula accepted by both churches as it is expressed in the ancient creed of Nicea (325). The difference between Lutherans and Catholics on reading the church fathers historically comes because of the difference in view of the (im)mutability and development of doctrine.

The title of L/RC I, *The Status of the Nicene Creed as Dogma of the Church*, is only partially addressed in the round itself. L/RC I does examine the Nicene Creed, its development and meaning. But it leaves the second part of the title, “of the Church,” largely unexplored. That is, for L/RC I, the Nicene Creed receives a good deal of attention as a means for teaching the faith and prescribing the proper ways in which the faith should be taught. However, there is very little concerning how the Nicene Creed itself serves as a means whereby both churches can jointly confess the one faith of the church, nor what authority it has within and over either church or both churches.

The fathers are used to construct a history of the development of the Nicene Creed, and they do not come to bear on the constructive theological arguments behind the agreements themselves. Moreover, in this round they are read by the Lutherans with a distinctively Lutheran stress and by the Catholics with a distinctively Catholic stress. For L/RC I, as mentioned above, the central issue is the (im)mutability of the creed; that it is mutable for Lutherans (as represented by Warren Quanbeck, dialogue member of L/RC I) and that it is not for Catholics (as represented by John Courtney Murray, fellow dialogue member). Since the key term discussed in L/RC I is the *homoousion*, my examination will be centered on the comments made by Quanbeck and Murray on Athanasius and Arius.
It would seem easy to argue that in L/RC I the Lutherans and Catholics would read the fathers jointly, that they would agree on how to use them to fashion the history of the creed’s development. To be sure, there is an element of this in L/RC I. Since the Nicene Creed is held by both Lutherans and Catholics as true and proper formulation of Christian teaching and belief that arose from the condemnation of Arian views (and Arius himself), both churches are agreed on how to erect a history of the Arian controversy as it informs the Creed itself. George Lindbeck, a Lutheran participant in L/RC I, states, “The Arian use of the [New Testament’s] subordinationist and adoptionist concepts and images was heretical because it was, so to speak, opposed to the intention of the [New Testament’s] usage which was to exalt Christ, rather than to lower Him.”

Likewise, the Catholic John Courtney Murray claims, “Arius, and later Eunomius, felt it necessary to appeal to this norm [the word of God in the Scriptures], though their doctrinal systems owed nothing to Scripture.” Thus we do indeed have both the Lutheran and Catholic sides agreeing on how to use the fathers in order to build a history of how the Nicene Creed came to existence.

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428 It is good to remind the reader here that L/RC I took place over only two days, July 6-7, 1965, and was largely an introductory session. Since both churches confess the Nicene Creed as the central creedal statement of the faith, it was a fairly un-contentious topic for discussion. Thus, the conversations were explanations of each church to the other about how the Nicene Creed functions for them.


430 More recent scholarship has raised questions about how much Arius himself was actually involved in formulating and defending what has become the ‘Arian view’ of Christology and trinitarian theology. See Robert C. Gregg and Dennis E. Groh, Early Arianism – A View of Salvation (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981); and Arianism After Arius: Essays on the Development of the Fourth Century Trinitarian Conflicts, ed. Michael R. Barnes and Daniel H. Williams (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993). While this research brings new understandings for what the earliest Arians were actually doing as well as for the complexities of their sometimes fractured socio-political settings, it does not bear directly on the findings or presentations from L/RC I. If the L/RC were to take up the topic of the Nicene Creed again, as I suggest later in this section, then it would be interesting to see how this newer research on Arius and Arianism would play a role.
This agreement on the historical situation which produced the Nicene Creed is the basis for much of the agreement of L/RC I. The Summary Statement begins, “We confess in common the Nicene Faith and therefore hold that the Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, who was made man, suffered, died, and rose again for our salvation, is true God.” The next two points claim, “The Nicene Faith gathers up and articulates the biblical testimony concerning the Son and His relationship to the Father,” and that the church did so by stating “her faith in the Son in non-biblical terms to answer the Arian question.” The last two points of joint confession support the views that Jesus Christ still works for our salvation in the present and that the Creed is “both doxology to God the Father and dogma about God the Son.” This joint presentation of the history produces fruit on at least one point regarding the role of dogma in the separated Lutheran and Roman Catholic Churches. The two can agree that authoritative teaching of the church is both positive and negative, both affirming and clarifying the beliefs and practices of the church and also pointing out and condemning false teaching.

However, for our purposes here I will highlight how Athanasius and Arius are read differently by Lutherans and Catholics as part of the explanation of the formulation of the Creed. The key circumstance for this difference comes from the particular ways Lutherans and Catholics make sense of the fact that the Nicene faith answers what John Courtney Murray calls an “ever-recurring question,” but does not exhaust the formulations of that answer. The thrust of L/RC I was to examine how Lutherans and Catholics agree on a seminal confession and profession of the church, the central point of

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432 L/RC I, 31.
434 L/RC I, 32.
435 L/RC I, 32.
dogma from which all others arise – namely the *homoousion*. As I will explain below, the characteristic difference in how Lutherans and Catholics read the Creed itself comes from their views of contingency surrounding the formulation of the Creed. Lutherans tend to read the Creed in a typically confessional way, that is, they place an emphasis on the beliefs expressed in the Creed over the articulations of phrases within the Creed. Catholics, on the other hand, read the substance of the creedal subject as inherent in the formulation itself, a position rising from viewing the Creed as historical evidence of closure on the *homoousion*.\(^{436}\)

The Lutheran position as represented by Warren Quanbeck makes two main points. First, there is an insistence on continuity of the faith of the Reformers with the ancient church. When the Lutheran Confessions contain such texts as “the three ecumenical creeds, the Augsburg Confession and its Apology (1530), the Schmalkald Articles (1537), and Luther’s two Catechisms,” they are intending to affirm “the catholic character and purpose of the Lutheran reformation.”\(^ {437}\) As the creeds are used for the purpose of the church’s self-understanding, Quanbeck argues:

> The ecclesiastical and theological disputes of the sixteenth century saw labels distributed generously. In this atmosphere the Lutheran church seeks to identify herself as a church participating in the catholic tradition of the west, as standing in continuity with the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. It did not seek to repristinate the apostolic age, but accepted the validity of all the theological,

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\(^{436}\) This does not mean that there are not disagreements among and between Lutherans on this very issue. The status of the Nicene Creed’s authority and by what means its authority is expressed is surely not settled, no doubt a consequence of the fact that the polity of the church (the place wherein the Creed’s authority might reside) is such a contentious issue. Robert Preus comments on some of the array of possible Lutheran positions about this issue in his *Confessional Subscription: Faithful Confessional Life in the Church* from the Lutheran Congress, August 31 - September 2, 1970, found at <http://user.txcyber.com/~wd5iqr/tcl/conf_sub.htm>, accessed on May 5, 2008.

liturgical, and administrative traditions which in its judgment did not stand in opposition to the gospel.\textsuperscript{438}

When Quanbeck comments on the “validity of all the … traditions which … did not stand in opposition to the gospel” we have an example of the emphasis on the contingency and therefore mutability of creedal formulation from a Lutheran point of view.

This leads to the second point. Quanbeck makes an assertion that betrays the difference with Murray on the historical reading of the fathers in question, Athanasius and Arius. Indeed, it seems that Quanbeck is hardly able to affirm any authority of the creed without first offering a spate of qualifications. He claims:

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\text{confession of the Nicene Creed does not commit the church to the cosmology, epistemology, metaphysics, geography or church politics of the men who framed it. The task of proclaiming the gospel in our time requires that we use the language of our day and address ourselves to contemporary situations. If the language or ideas of the fourth century can help us, we are free to use them. Where they are opaque to contemporary men, their use produces more confusion than clarity. Our confession of the Nicene Creed is our recognition that given the fourth century situation we stand with Athanasius against Arius on Trinitarian and Christological issues.}\textsuperscript{439}
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So, Quanbeck’s Lutheran view is that the formulations of the creed are utterly contingent upon the historical situation of Athanasius and Arius.

It is not clear how Quanbeck’s position fits with the Summary Statement’s claim that the “Nicene Faith … [is the] definitive reply to an ever-recurring question [is the Son Son or creature?]”.\textsuperscript{440} If, as L/RC I claims, this ever-recurring question is the seminal question of the faith, and the Nicene answer is the definitive reply, then Quanbeck’s statement is not in keeping with the document. Some questions may be posed to Quanbeck’s position: first, might there be other situations wherein Quanbeck would stand

\textsuperscript{438} Quanbeck, “Part I”, L/RC I, 8.
\textsuperscript{439} L/RC I, 9.
\textsuperscript{440} L/RC I, 32.
with Arius against Athanasius? While Quanbeck gives no direction for an answer to this, he leaves the possibility that such situations might arise. Another question to ask Quanbeck: is the creedal formulation in any way inseparable from its confessional content? It appears that for Quanbeck the answer is no.

Quanbeck makes a similar historical distinction in an essay published ten years after L/RC I. In his “The Formula of Concord and Authority in the Church,” he examines the role of the three ecumenical creeds for the later-generation Reformers. He makes the point that the Reformers’ defense of their positions as being in concert with the ancient faith of the church rests on their own understanding of *ius divinum* and *ius humanum* and that, further, our own situation does not allow for such facile distinction. Quanbeck claims, “We now see the doctrine of the Trinity and Christological definitions as children of mixed parentage, their mother the prophetic-apostolic tradition of the Scriptures and the Christian community, their father the hellenistic philosophical tradition.” The proper parental line is the maternal, since “[t]hese are Christian doctrines, growing out of the Christian mission in the ancient world and making a necessary truth-claim by using resources of hellenistic metaphysics.”

If Quanbeck’s Lutheran position claims that there is little inherent connection of the formulations of the creed with its substance because the historical situation of Athanasius and Arius is so contingent, John Courtney Murray’s Catholic position

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442 Quanbeck, “Formula of Concord,” 54.
443 Quanbeck, “Formula of Concord,” 54. It appears here that Quanbeck is taking part in just the kind of history-making which privileges a Protestant view of the early church as pure and more Biblicist in orientation over and against the Catholic pollution of the early church by bringing in unwelcome pagan elements that Smith criticizes in his *Drudgery Divine*. 
provides a more nuanced view of how the formulation and substance are entwined into what he calls a “limit-concept.” First, Murray explains that the Nicene dogma underwent its own time of development, noting that the *homoousion* which was developed for the Son was later applied to the Spirit (explicitly by Constantinople I, 381) as well as the many ways in which the *homoousion* with regard to the Son was expressed throughout the Arian controversy. Second, Murray addresses the question as to whether the *homoousion* can be further developed today, to which he forthrightly answers no, “Nicaea answered the Arian question, ‘Is the Son Son or creature?’ … The Nicene answer to the Arian question is formal and definitive. There is no going beyond it, since it brings the believer to the very edge of the abyss of the mystery of the eternal Son, who is God of God.”

Thus Murray calls the Nicene formulation a “limit-concept.”

For Murray this “limit-concept” is fixed, both as a dogmatic truth and as an historical reality. It cannot be undone or surpassed on either score. Quanbeck may agree, as we saw above, with the former, but he is not clear about the latter. For Murray, Athanasius’ transition from biblical terminology to extra-biblical terminology was made historically “for reasons of polemic necessity” and “the new usage was defended as an exception, not as an instance of a general principle.” The point is that Athanasius, along with any of the Nicene Fathers, would not have been aware of their involvement in what we now call the development of doctrine. Historically, they were simply at the point of making an acquisition of new knowledge. In this process, Murray argues, “a man must first reach the term of the movement – the knowledge itself – before he can

444 L/RC I, 22-23.
know what the term is, much less understand the process whereby he reached it.\textsuperscript{446} Athanasius, among the other fathers, was merely at the point of discovery and unable to reflect beyond that.

Thus, Murray reads the historical situation of Athanasius and Arius differently from Quanbeck. For Murray, the point of discovery, the Nicene answer to the Arian question, is fixed historically both in the factual data of the circumstances surrounding the Nicene formulation, and also in the formulation itself. Murray is arguing not only that, in Quanbeck’s words, given the fourth century situation (i.e., if we found ourselves in it again somehow), we would side with Athanasius over Arius. Beyond this he is arguing that the central issue, the \textit{homoousion} as “limit-concept” obtains in every situation because it expresses a truth that obtains in every situation.\textsuperscript{447} Further yet, the truth \textit{and its formulation} in the Creed itself are so intertwined that one is not found in its fullness without the other.

In the end, we have the basic historical difference between the Lutheran and Catholic views as they are presented in L/RC I over the Athanasian and Arian situation: it has to do with the historical contingency of the circumstances leading to the Nicene formulations. Neither argues with the historical data of the fourth century events themselves. However, the Lutheran view, expressed by Quanbeck, argues that historical contingencies allow for the possibility that there may be other formulations of the Nicene truth. The Catholic view, expressed by Murray, argues that the Nicene truth is entwined

\textsuperscript{446} L/RC I, 25.
\textsuperscript{447} Indeed, this seems to be the point of the Prologue to the Gospel of John and the second article Nicene phrase “through him all things were made.”
in its formulation and cannot be undone or superseded in any other historical circumstance.

Part of the reason for the apparent impasse is the fact that the question of the authority that the creed may (or may not) have over Lutherans and Catholics is left unaddressed in L/RC I. This brings me to reiterate my comments from earlier, that L/RC I does not address the place of the Creed in the life of the church. It does not make any meaningful connection between the Creed and the nature or purpose of the church. If L/RC I had done so, then the fathers may very well have appeared in the constructive ecumenical argument. To be fair, this may have been beyond what the first round was capable of accomplishing as the very first round of dialogue between U.S. Lutherans and Catholics. Nevertheless, at the very least, I would argue that returning to the Creed in such a way is a more-than-viable possibility.

**Conclusion**

As this chapter has demonstrated, the church fathers are used to construct histories for four of the rounds of the U.S. Lutheran/Catholic dialogue. They are used jointly in three of these rounds (on baptism, justification, and the saints and Mary) to erect histories that serve as historical background for the ecumenical conversations. These histories focus on three aspects: practices regarding baptism and regarding devotions to the saints and Mary; the development of theologies and doctrines on baptism, justification, and the saints and Mary; and the ‘patristic intent’ of both the Reformers and Catholics in the sixteenth century on the efficacy of baptism. The church fathers are used distinctly – and in fact, differently – in one of these rounds (on the
Nicene Creed), where the Lutherans and Catholics take contrasting positions over the issue of historical contingency with regard to the development of doctrine.

Further, we saw how the L/RC used the fathers in constructing these histories. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter and as we saw demonstrated throughout the chapter, there are two major categories of use and one minor category. The major categories have to do with ecclesial practice and the development of doctrine. For the first, L/RC II uses the fathers to produce a history that demonstrates the common ground between Lutherans and Catholics on baptism – that both baptize infants. Also for the first, L/RC VII uses the fathers to construct a history that shows the development of and variety of devotional practices for Mary and the saints, practices that were common to both Lutherans and Catholics though they differed on which to keep and what they mean.

For the second use, development of doctrine, we saw how L/RC II uses the fathers to fashion a history of original sin that shows how the Augustinian problematic of original sin arises after the creedal formulation “baptism for the remission of sins” and should not be read back into the formulation. We also saw how L/RC VII uses the fathers to produce a history that demonstrated the difference between the East and the West over the issue of justification: that the East did not have to contend with the West’s Augustinian heritage on justification, one that needed reinterpretations into the medieval ages and beyond. Further, we saw how L/RC VIII uses the fathers to create a history that traces the development of doctrinal points regarding the saints and Mary, ones which were reflections on and reactions to emerging devotional practices. Finally, we saw how L/RC I uses the fathers to produce a history of the development of the Nicene Creed. But a difference arises wherein the Lutherans and Catholics differ on how to understand the
Creed itself, with the Lutherans placing more emphasis on the meaning of the Creed and the Catholics placing more emphasis on the creedal formulation having an integral role in expressing the Creed’s meaning.

The single minor category is the “patristic intent” of the Reformers and the Council of Trent for the efficacy of baptism. L/RC II used the fathers to generate a history that shows how both Reformers and Catholics were committed to showing how their views of baptism’s effectiveness corresponded with the views of the church fathers.

The following two tables show various points about how the L/RC used the fathers. Table 2 shows where the fathers appear in the published materials from the four rounds we have examined in this chapter. The fathers appear in background material for all four, but only in the Common Statements of two – L/RC VII and VIII. This difference is because the Common Statements from the first two rounds were extremely brief, only two pages for L/RC I and one page for L/RC II. By the time of rounds seven and eight the dialogue process had become more elaborate and the published materials much fuller. Thus, these later two rounds have extensive historical studies, in which the fathers appear.
TABLE 2 – PRESENTATIONS IN THE L/RC THAT USED THE CHURCH FATHERS AS HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

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There are two points to notice about Table 2. First, the various scholars who used the fathers were writing, sensibly enough, about areas on which they had knowledge. So, for instance, Arthur Carl Piepkorn was called upon to give a paper laying out the Lutheran view of baptism for L/RC II, in which he cites patristic sources. Likewise, three Catholics presented papers on Mary and the saints for L/RC VIII, using patristic sources, because they had knowledge of those Catholic issues. Second, it is interesting to note how the explicitly patristic presentations were handled. It seems that this work was also given to those most capable. When the work is divided up, as in L/RC VII, it seemed not to be so that a balanced study would be gained but because there were two aspects to the
work (presentations of the Western and Eastern fathers on justification) and those should be handled separately.

Table 3 catalogues the individual fathers and other ancient sources (such as Arius and Pelagius, who are clearly not church fathers) as they arise in these four rounds of the L/RC. The most obvious point of information from this table is one that we have already touched on before: the seventh and eighth rounds have a much more extensive list of sources. This is because, again as mentioned before, the fathers were explored broadly in order to create as thorough an historical background for the topics of justification and the saints and Mary as possible. One other datum to highlight is that the only sources to appear in three of these rounds are Augustine, Origen, and Tertullian.

I have made some delineations in this chart. First, those sources that were used with greater frequency are noted by *bold italics*. Second the sources that were used jointly are noted by a checkmark (√) and those that were used differently by an (×).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L/RC I – Nicene Creed</th>
<th>L/RC II – Baptism for Forgiveness of Sins</th>
<th>L/RC VII – Justification</th>
<th>L/RC VIII – The One Mediator, the Saints, and Mary</th>
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<td>Clement of Rome</td>
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<td>Ignatius</td>
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<td>Irenaeus</td>
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<td>Origen</td>
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<td>Martyrdom of Polycarp ✓</td>
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<td>Arius ✗</td>
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<td>Athanasius ✗</td>
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<td>Marius Victorinus</td>
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<td>Pope Leo I</td>
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<td>Dionysus the Areopagite</td>
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<td>Germanus of Constantinople</td>
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<td>John of Damascus</td>
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These historical uses of the fathers were not the only options available for the U.S. L/RC. That is, the church fathers could very well have been used as part of the ecumenical argument for any of the topics of these four rounds. One possible reason the dialogue did not use the fathers in the arguments was because it did not relate any of the topics from these rounds directly to the church. As mentioned above, the following excursus will examine the ARCIC treatment of Mary and the saints, where the topic for dialogue was indeed related to the church, and the fathers were used in the ecumenical argument for that dialogue. And as we saw in the international Lutheran-Catholic dialogue, *The Church and Justification*, the fathers were used in the ecumenical argument, though only when the dialogue was expressly focused on the church itself and not on justification (as explained above). This shows the possibility that the same might have occurred for the L/RC as well.

Indeed, the fathers were used in the arguments of six rounds from the L/RC, as we will see in the next chapters. Likewise we will see that each of these six dialogue topics were one of two kinds: either the dialogue topic was related to the church or it was directly about the church and its activities and structures. For four of these rounds, moreover, we will see how communion ecclesiology, itself greatly informed by material from the church fathers, has been a growing asset in casting an ecumenical vision for the church.
This excursus will explore the statement from the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) “Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ”. Again, the reason I am raising another dialogue for contrast is to show how an ecumenical dialogue can make use of the fathers in an ecumenical argument while placing the subject matter in relationship to ecclesiology, thereby helping both parties understand how they can grow closer in unity.

By way of brief contrast, though the same history is rehearsed in the ARCIC document as in L/RC VIII, it is done with a particularly patristic focus. This focus deviates on two counts from L/RC VIII: on the use of the fathers only as historical background and on the dearth of any relationship between the ecumenical subject matter and the church. On the former, ARCIC’s “Mary” lauds Vatican II for a process of “re-reception” manifest in the “contemporary biblical, patristic, and liturgical renewals” which in turn allowed for, on the latter, a decision by Vatican II “not to draft a separate document on Mary, but to integrate doctrine about her into the Constitution on the Church.” In this way, “The Fathers of the Council consciously sought to resist exaggerations [of Mary’s role] by returning to patristic emphases and placing Marian doctrine and devotion in its proper Christological and ecclesial context.” The Vatican

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449 ARCIC, “Mary,” §47.

450 ARCIC, “Mary,” §47.
II decisions along with the Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* (1974) have “attempted to set Mary within the context of the teaching of Scripture and the ancient common tradition.”\(^{451}\)

Thus we have a clear contrast between L/RC VIII and ARCIC’s “Mary.” Directly in the body of ARCIC’s work the renewal of Marian references in Anglican worship over the twentieth century is cited as an example of ecumenical *rapprochement* with Rome.\(^{452}\) Not only is this the case for the similarity of worship content or style, but also for the larger and more theologically significant concern that such liturgical and devotional *rapprochement* is representative of the kind of life the church has as koinonia, the communion of saints. Indeed ARCIC offers a strong mutual confession:

As one who received the Word in her heart and in her body, and brought it forth into the world, Mary belongs in the prophetic tradition. We are agreed in our belief in the Blessed Virgin Mary as Theotokos. Our two communions are both heirs to a rich tradition which recognizes Mary as ever virgin, and sees her as the new Eve and as a type of the Church. We join in praying with Mary whom all generations have called blessed, in observing her festivals and according her honour in the communion of the saints, and are agreed that Mary and the saints pray for the whole Church. In all of this, we see Mary as inseparably linked with Christ and the Church.\(^{453}\)

The “tradition” is clearly the patristic, since all the characteristics cited are referred to in the history ARCIC presents. Thus, for ARCIC the fathers and the patristic period are integrally part of the ecumenical argument; and they are so because the church’s worship life and nature as communion are related to the dialogue’s subject matter. Indeed, it is part of the telling of the history that in the “High Middle Ages” there came a tendency for theology about and devotion to Mary that deviated from the patristic trajectory. Thus,

\(^{451}\) ARCIC, “Mary,” §50.
\(^{452}\) ARCIC, “Mary,” §50.
\(^{453}\) ARCIC, “Mary,” §51.
there was a “patristic reflection on Mary as ‘type’ of the Church, and also as the New Eve, in a way that associated her ever more closely with Christ in the continuing work of redemption.”\textsuperscript{454} This coupled with the rising scholasticism of the “Late Middle Ages” which “grew increasingly apart from spirituality” allowed for speculation divorced from the peoples’ devotional life. Additionally, “in popular religion, Mary came widely to be viewed as an intermediary between God and humanity, and even as a worker of miracles with powers that verged on the divine.”\textsuperscript{455}

\textsuperscript{454} ARCIC, “Mary,” §42.
\textsuperscript{455} ARCIC, “Mary,” §43.
CHAPTER 6

THE CHURCH FATHERS

IN CONSTRUCTIVE ECUMENICAL ARGUMENT, PART 1

THE IMPLICIT AND INDIRECT USE OF COMMUNION ECCLESIOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter will explore two of the rounds from the U.S. L/RC dialogue: L/RC VI, *Teaching Authority and Infallibility in the Church* (1980); and L/RC IX, *The Word of God: Scripture and Tradition* (1995). In these rounds, and the four rounds covered in the next chapter, the L/RC uses the fathers in the constructive ecumenical argument and not as sources for constructing histories that serve as historical background to the argument as I did in chapter 5. As I mentioned in the first chapter above, what I mean by the constructive ecumenical argument is the formulation of an ecumenical statement of some level of convergence, consensus, or agreement. So, in these rounds, the L/RC employed the church fathers as means for this end.

L/RC VI and L/RC IX each use the fathers in their own way. Recalling categories that I introduced in the first chapter of this present work, L/RC VI uses the fathers as precedent in order to expand the notion of teaching authority and its relationship to infallibility. In doing so, L/RC VI stresses the *function* and *purpose* of teaching authority and infallibility in the life of the church. Using another category introduced earlier, L/RC
IX uses the fathers as sources of understanding the relationship between Scripture and Tradition in order to begin to remove the obstacle of the problematic interpretation of Trent on Scripture and Tradition: that revelation has two founts, an interpretation that has at times caused Lutherans to take a minimalist view of the worth of Tradition. In using the fathers in these ways in the constructive ecumenical argument, the L/RC has been able to make ecumenical advancements on these two apostolic topics. The apostolicity of the teaching authority of the church has been recast from content (the gospel, for Lutherans) or form (the institution of the magisterium, for Catholics) to its function and purpose. Similarly, the apostolic character of both Scripture and Tradition is set against the larger background of viewing the Word of God as the common source for both Scripture and Tradition.

One other distinction needs to be made as to the use of the church fathers. It is that L/RC VI makes use of specific fathers, while L/RC IX speaks only generally of episodes and movements within the development of the early church. Part of the reason for this difference comes from the variance in format between the two rounds; essentially, L/RC VI consists of the results from what had become the normal procedure for the dialogue, to discuss an array of background papers over a series of meetings with the goal of producing a Common Statement, while L/RC IX consists of only a Common Statement.\textsuperscript{456}

\textsuperscript{456} Apparently there was some difficulty in convening the meetings for L/RC IX; see John Reumann and Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “Scripture as Norm for Our Common Faith,” \textit{Journal of Ecumenical Studies} 30:1 (Winter, 1993): 81-107, at 107. There were papers discussed, but they do not even appear in the endnotes to the Common Statement. There is no evidence of their direct impact on the Statement, very unlike the previous rounds where one can trace, either directly or indirectly, the material from various background essays into the Common Statements.
In addition to the L/RC using the fathers in the constructive ecumenical argument, it also places the subjects for these rounds – teaching authority and Scripture and Tradition – directly in relationship to and in the context of the church itself. For the four rounds examined in the next chapter, the L/RC does this by making explicit use of communion ecclesiology. For the two rounds examined in this chapter, however, the L/RC implicitly (in the case of L/RC VI) and indirectly (in the case of L/RC IX) uses communion ecclesiology.

Each of these rounds has its own circumstances which help explain how communion ecclesiology is used implicitly and indirectly. The subject of L/RC VI follows a line of thought begun in L/RC IV (*Eucharist and Ministry*) and continued in L/RC V (*Papal Primacy and the Universal Church*). This line of thought was about the office of Ministry in the church, first taking up the place of the one who presides at the Eucharist and then taking up the role of papal primacy in the life of the universal church. In each of these cases, as we will see in the next chapter, the L/RC made explicit use of elements of communion ecclesiology. L/RC VI makes implicit use of communion ecclesiology by addressing the question of teaching authority as a question of its function and purpose, both of which extend beyond the confines of either the Lutherans or the Catholics. That is, L/RC VI speaks of teaching authority as something that exists within Lutheran and Catholic churches and somehow shared between them. In this way, L/RC VI implicitly uses communion ecclesiology because it recognizes teaching authority as a necessary ingredient in the relationship between Lutherans and Catholics as they strive for visible unity.
L/RC IX’s circumstance is different from L/RC VI. L/RC IX followed the rounds on justification and the saints and Mary. As we saw in the previous chapter, justification was addressed because it was a central problematic issue from the sixteenth century and the saints and Mary were addressed as a test case for the use of justification as the criterion by which to judge practices, theologies, and structures in the church. In neither of these rounds did the L/RC place the subject in the context of the church. So, communion ecclesiology was not at the forefront when L/RC IX took up Scripture and Tradition. Nevertheless, L/RC IX holds that the Word of God is expressed in both Scripture and Tradition and that the church is the fundamental context in which the Word of God is to be understood. Thus, the church is the community in which the Word of God is revealed through Scripture and Tradition. In this way L/RC IX indirectly uses communion ecclesiology.

Official Roman Catholic teaching allows for recognition of the Word of God at work through Scripture and Tradition as found in other churches or ecclesial communities. It also holds, though, that the Church that Christ founded “subsists in” the Catholic Church, implying that it does so in a way that it does not “subsist in” other churches or ecclesial communities. The Catholic Church considers itself to be in partial not full, real but imperfect, communion with these other ecclesial bodies. This self-understanding differs from any approach that would posit one large church beyond

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457 See UR 2 which states: “Jesus Christ, then, willed that the apostles and their successors – the bishops with Peter's successor at their head – should preach the Gospel faithfully, administer the sacraments, and rule the Church in love.” Also see LG 8 which reads, “This Church constituted and organized as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him, although many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside of its visible structure.”

458 On this point, see Pope John Paul II’s Ut Unum Sint 11, “Indeed, the elements of sanctification and truth present in other Christian Communities, in a degree which varies from one to the other constitute the objective basis of the communion, albeit imperfect, which exists between them and the Catholic Church.”
any particular Christian traditions to which all the various churches belong in their own way. In contrast, a Lutheran position can posit that there is indeed one communion, bigger than any particular tradition, to which churches in various traditions participate in their own limited ways. This Lutheran view acknowledges that particular traditions may indeed be themselves fully church, but that that one complete church extends beyond any of them in themselves. In such a view, church as a communion does not necessarily entail a specific church structure, since Lutherans maintain that the proper preaching of the gospel and administration of the sacraments presumes an office of ministry, that is, one who does the preaching and presiding.459 For both Catholics and Lutherans, then, there is participation in communion, but this participation is not yet in the fullness of ecclesial communion.

L/RC VI – *Teaching Authority and Infallibility in the Church* (1980)
*Fathers as Precedent in an Implicit Communion Ecclesiology*

As noted above, L/RC VI uses the church fathers as precedent for expanding the concept of the teaching authority of the church in terms of its function and purpose. What I mean by the term ‘expanding’ is that the use of the church fathers has helped the Lutherans and Catholics of this dialogue go beyond what they each had typically taken the concept of teaching authority to mean. The approach of L/RC VI is not to parse the terminology of teaching authority and infallibility through exegesis in order to fashion understandings or definitions of them, while taking into account distinctively Lutheran

459 See the often cited CA 7, which reads: “It is also taught that at all times there must be and remain one holy, Christian church. It is the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel. For this is enough for the true unity of the Christian church that there the gospel is preached harmoniously according to a pure understanding and the sacraments are administered in conformity with the divine Word” (*BC*, 42).
and Roman Catholic concerns. Instead, L/RC VI takes a similar tack to that of L/RC IV in discussions on the Ministry (as we will see in the next chapter). This tack is to consider the function and purpose of both teaching authority and infallibility; it helps the ecumenical work to avoid potential encumbrances of partisanship and permits a joint examination of teaching authority and infallibility. While L/RC VI does not state in so many words that the function and purpose of teaching authority and infallibility are the central terms for orienting this round’s work, it is consistent with some final comments from the Common Statement: L/RC VI claims, “It is through Scripture, tradition, and teaching authority that the Spirit enables the believing community to settle disputes about the gospel.”

There are two theological bases for this joint examination. First, there is joint confession that God, known through the Son Jesus Christ, “is the source and ground of authority for the Church of Christ.” The gospel “is an expression of this authority” and has been known and served in many ways throughout the life of the church. Second, both the Lutherans and the Catholics of L/RC VI used the terms ‘promise’, ‘trust’, ‘hope’, and ‘confidence’ in discussing the character and importance of infallibility. The church fathers are important to the ecumenical argument that here examines the purpose and

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460 L/RC IV refers to ministry with a lower-case “m” to designate the purpose and work of the entire church, and it refers to Ministry with a capital “M” to designate office(s) set aside for particular forms of service.
462 “Common Statement,” L/RC VI, 14
463 The “Catholic Reflections” to the “Common Statement” state, “The attempt to express papal infallibility in terms of promise, trust, and hope has already brought us a long way toward agreement” (L/RC VI, 58). Likewise, the “Lutheran Reflections” state, “[Lutherans] rejoice in the increasing emphasis among Catholics on the supremely normative status of the gospel as witnessed to in Scripture and on the importance of understanding infallibility in terms of trust, confidence, and hope in God’s promises” (L/RC VI, 64).
function of teaching authority and infallibility. Not only is this the case in an historical manner, as in the last chapter of this work, which created histories as background to the ecumenical arguments. In addition, the fathers are an aid to L/RC VI in the sense that they are precedents for expanding the understanding of teaching authority by treating it in terms of function and purpose. The L/RC examines the church fathers in their own situations and finds that the fathers placed great emphasis on the function and purpose (along side form and structure) of teaching authority and strains of what would become what some medieval theologians and eventually nineteenth-century Roman Catholics call infallibility.\textsuperscript{464} This emphasis on function and purpose is a crucial part of the ecumenical argument of L/RC VI.

There are two points of ecumenical convergence attained in L/RC VI that need to be cited before we can move on to the patristic evidence in the argument. At the end of the “Common Statement” L/RC VI lists eleven such points; two are pertinent for us:

- that the apostolic Tradition in which the Word of God is transmitted, while normative for all other tradition in the Church, is interpreted within the family of God with the assistance of tradition in the form of creeds, liturgies, dogma, confessions, doctrines, forms of church government and discipline, and patterns of devotion and service;

- that there are Ministries and structures charged with the teaching of Christian doctrine and with supervision and coordination of the ministry of the whole

\textsuperscript{464} In his background essay to L/RC VI, “Infallibility: The Terminology,” Avery Dulles notes the timeframe when the term ‘infallible’ or the notion of ‘infallibility’ first came into use. Dulles writes, “In the later Middle Ages some authors used the term \textit{inerrabilitas} to mean what is commonly called infallibility today. Thus Peter John Olivi (d. 1298), usually cited as one of the early witnesses to the doctrine of papal infallibility, maintained that the pope was to be believed as an \textit{inerrabilis regula} in matters of faith and morals” (L/RC VI, 74). More recently, in his book \textit{Beyond the Reformation?: Authority, Primacy and Unity in the Conciliar Tradition} (New York: T&T Clark, 2006) Paul Avis examines the language and use of ‘infallibility’ around the time of the Councils of Constance and Basel, especially in connection to the conciliar movement (\textit{Beyond the Reformation?}, 84-108). Avis explains how important the phrase \textit{plenitudo potestatis} was as a forerunner to infallibility. It was first employed by Leo I, but not attributed to a reigning pope until Bernard of Clairvaux ascribed it to Eugenius III (pope from 1145 to 1153).
people of God, and that their task includes the mandate for bishops or other leaders to “judge doctrine and condemn doctrine that is contrary to the Gospel.”

For L/RC VI, the function and purpose of teaching authority and infallibility are intimately related to the key aspects of these two points of convergence; namely, the transmission and interpretation of the apostolic Tradition and the Ministries and structures of the church. Neither teaching authority nor infallibility is an end to itself, but always in subordination to and in service of the gospel. Additionally, L/RC VI sets the teaching authority of the church in a broader context alongside Scripture and Tradition as that which guides the church in understanding and living according to the gospel.

From the very outset of the “Common Statement”, L/RC VI cites the church fathers as important to the ecumenical task in L/RC VI. Lutherans and Catholics find they are helped to examine infallibility in a fresh way because, “the topic has been set in the broader horizon of doctrinal authority in the early Church, especially as examined in light of modern historical studies in Scripture and the Church Fathers.”

There are two particular expressions of the joint examination of the fathers that bear upon the ecumenical argument of L/RC VI. In each case, L/RC VI uses the fathers as precedent for expanding the concept of teaching authority. First, Clement of Rome, Irenaeus, and Tertullian are cited in a discussion of how the gospel and its authority are summarized in the regula fidei, in particular as a defense (especially in the cases of Irenaeus and Tertullian) against gnosticism. Second, two bishops of Rome are cited,

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465 L/RC VI, 31. The quotation at the end is from the Augsburg Confession XXVIII:21, the whole sentence of which reads, “Consequently, according to divine right it is the office of the bishops to preach the gospel, to forgive sin, to judge doctrine and reject doctrine that is contrary to the gospel, and to exclude from the Christian community the ungodly whose ungodly life is manifest – not with human power but with God’s Word alone.” Book of Concord, eds. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 94.


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Gelasius and Innocent I, in a discussion of the rise in “special importance” of the apostolic sees, and in particular Rome. In the first case, the agreement between Lutherans and Catholics on the importance of the *regula fidei* as an expression of teaching authority is not in dispute, but necessary for examination in connection to the second case, where the differences between Lutherans and Catholics become pronounced, chiefly because “the traditional organs for continuing this process of interpretation [of authoritative teaching] were largely lost to the Lutheran churches at the time of the Reformation.”

Nevertheless, as L/RC VI shows, there has been a renewed desire among many Lutheran bodies to recover what had been lost, including a renewed relationship with the papacy. Moreover, the Catholics in the dialogue explored avenues of reform with regard to the papal office and infallibility that would make infallibility more meaningful for and palatable for other churches. For example, Catholics might “observe an evangelical discretion in the titles bestowed on the papacy, avoiding that exaggerated language which tends to obscure the radical distinction between Christ or his Spirit and all other teachers within the Church, including the pope.” In the same vein, Catholic leaders might “invite Lutheran church authorities to participate in the formulation of Catholic doctrine in a consultative capacity, seeking to follow and even to go beyond the precedent set by the participation of non-Catholic observers at Vatican Council II.”

The three examples of Clement of Rome, Irenaeus, and Tertullian are standard in the search for formulations of early summaries of the faith. These were written in each

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468 L/RC VI, 58.
469 L/RC VI, 59.
case so that the church might have the authority of the gospel affirmed, and each in quite a distinct circumstance. Clement, writing from the end of the first century, from Rome to Corinth, is the earliest. Clement wanted to urge the Corinthians to overcome their longstanding disputation with one another, in part, by reminding them of the unity they share by virtue of the faith they have, given from God by which justification obtains. Thus, he formulaically notes that righteousness is from faith and not any human effort.

In *I Clement*, he writes:

> And so we, having been called through his will in Christ Jesus, are not justified through ourselves or through our own wisdom or understanding or piety, or works that we have done in holiness of heart, but through faith, by which the Almighty God has justified all who have existed from the beginning; to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.⁴⁷⁰

This formulation of faith sets in the midst of a litany against the causes of the Corinthian church’s internal strife, jealousy, and envy.

Irenaeus pens his *Adversus Haereses* in the late second century in Lyons. It is the first extensive and formal defense of what Irenaeus considered the faith of the apostles against Gnosticism. The Valentinian Gnostics were arranging the biblical texts so as to make way for a superordinate pleroma greater than God the Father, thus undoing, according to Irenaeus, the basic trinitarian shape of holy writ. In his defense Irenaeus refers to what he names the “rule of truth”; received in baptism, this rule of truth safeguards the believer in knowing the “names, phrases, and parables of scripture” but not according to the Gnostic system, instead according to the same faith the apostles

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received from God the Father.\(^{471}\) This rule does the work, for Irenaeus, of keeping the
exegete of scripture in line with the essential plot and narrative of the text. This rule of
truth advocated for reading the scriptural texts with an understanding of an intrinsic shape
and pattern to the revelation there given. As it was the possession of the church and
performed the necessary exegetical direction-giving, the rule of truth attained authority.

Likewise, Tertullian wrote from Carthage in the early third century. What he
termed the *regula fidei* was authoritative. In his *Prescription Against Heretics* XIII.1, in
which he argues against all manner of philosophies as heretical, he writes:

> Now, with regard to this rule of faith – that we may from this point acknowledge
what it is which we defend – it is, you must know, that which prescribes the belief
that there is one only God … This rule … was taught by Christ, and raises
amongst ourselves no other questions than those which heresies introduce, and
which make men heretics.\(^{472}\)

The Carthaginian theologian may go beyond the bishop of Lyons in the seriousness with
which he holds to the *regula* and the amount of work it does for him, but it is consistent
with his assertion that correct interpretation of scripture is possible only where the true
faith has been established and kept: in the church. While the *regula* was not equal or
superior to scripture in the life of the church, it was simply necessary as scripture’s
companion for knowing and defending the faith and thus was authoritative.

So with Clement, Irenaeus, and Tertullian we have three patristic expressions of
the authority of Christian teaching in the form of the *regula fidei*, the sure and accepted
content of faith. These are used in L/RC VI directly in the ecumenical argument to
buttress the dialogue’s jointly-held position that the agreement on the function and

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\(^{471}\) *Adversus Haereses* 1.9.4 and 1.10.1, in *Irenaeus of Lyons*, introduction and translation by Robert M. Grant (New York: Routledge, 1997), 70.

purpose of teaching authority is seminal to coming to an agreement about the role of teaching authority in the life of the church. For these ancients, that function and purpose were to discern and defend the true Christian faith of the gospel, first in the face of internal divisions (Clement) and second over and against external gnostic incursions (Irenaeus and Tertullian). The formulations of these fathers are held jointly by Lutherans and Catholics in L/RC VI as expressions of properly authoritative teachings, and helped as precedents for expanding the concept of teaching authority.

A difficulty arises for L/RC VI in sharing the memory of the ancient world when such teaching authority extends beyond the kinds explored above, those which are precedents for the formal creed of Nicaea, to those kinds of teaching authority that are dependent upon established ecclesiastical jurisdictions which arose following Constantine’s Christianization of the Roman Empire. The difficulty comes because this union between teaching authority and ecclesiastical jurisdiction is precisely what gives Lutherans pause. Clement of Rome might represent an early example of this, since in his situation anything like a formal presbyteral or episcopal structural network with determined geographical bounds was absent. However, soon after the formulations of Irenaeus and Tertullian, as L/RC VI states, “By the middle of the third century … [the Roman bishops] seem to have assumed special responsibility for preserving and interpreting the faith of ‘antiquity’ because of the prerogatives of the See of Peter (cathedra Petri).”

Two examples are offered in L/RC VI: Popes Innocent I (402-17) and Gelasius (492-6) show Roman prevalence of teaching authority both in its position of honor and

473 L/RC VI, 21.
The Roman church gained special importance in the Roman Empire; prestige was attributed to the bishop of Rome: his faith included “in the official norm of orthodoxy.” L/RC VI cites Innocent’s 417 letter to the bishops of the council of Carthage, where he writes, from Rome “the other churches, like waters proceeding from their natal source … (like) pure streams from an uncorrupt head, should take up what they ought to enjoin.” Primary jurisdictional teaching authority came to be attributed to Rome “almost casually with Pope Gelasius.” One main aspect of this was in the ‘reception’ of previous teaching of the church by Rome, which confirmed the status and authority of those teachings. As L/RC VI states, “Roman bishops from the fourth century on regarded their ‘confirmation’ of conciliar actions as an indispensable sign of authoritative teaching.”

Allowing for the remaining points of tension between Lutherans and Catholics over the meaning and development of infallibility from the early medieval period onward, the Common Statement of L/RC VI states, “Whatever one may think about the appropriateness of the term ‘infallible,’ it points to the unavoidable issue of the faithful transmission of the gospel and its authoritative interpretation, guided by the Spirit.” It is this ‘faithful transmission’ that is at the heart of the church’s teaching authority, its very function and purpose; on this both Lutherans and Catholics can agree. For L/RC VI, the study of the fathers brought this to clarity. Indeed, as Lutherans make use of and focus on ‘indefectibility’, “the continued existence of the Church in all its essential

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474 L/RC VI, 21-22.
475 L/RC VI, 21.
476 L/RC VI, 21.
477 L/RC VI, 22.
478 L/RC VI, 22
479 L/RC VI, 23.
aspects, including its faith,” and as Catholics make use of and focus on ‘infallibility’, “an immunity from error in specific beliefs and teachings,” they are each finding that the other is increasingly using the terms in very similar ways, ways that are present in the church fathers.  

As an example, both Lutherans and Catholics might view their positions in the *Adversus Haereses* of Irenaeus. Indeed, Irenaeus is cited in L/RC VI’s Common Statement as a church father whose formulation of the core elements of Christian belief helped to shape what would become the Apostles’ Creed. And beyond this point, Robert Eno, in a background essay to L/RC VI, cites Irenaeus as one who defends the position of Rome’s prominence among the apostolic sees. Lutherans might find in Irenaeus a defense of the church’s indefectibility, Catholics, a defense of infallibility.

To explain further, Lutherans might find in Irenaeus a church father who articulates and defends the position that the “faithful transmission of the gospel and its authoritative interpretation” is a primary concern of the church. This is the case for Irenaeus when he describes the unified faith of the church in *Adversus Haereses* 1.10.1-2. On this Lutheran understanding of Irenaeus, the teaching authority of the church rests in its ability to pass on the apostolic faith from generation to generation. Catholics would certainly agree.

The difference in emphasis, however, arises when Lutherans and Catholics come to another significant, and longer, passage from Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 3.3.1-
3.4.2. Here Irenaeus is describing the apostolic tradition, the succession of this tradition in Rome, and the role of tradition in the life of the church. Lutherans could find in this passage evidence of the indefectibility of the church, that is, its continued existence of its essential aspects, including its faith. This indefectibility resides in the church’s diligent transmission of the faith, examples of which, Irenaeus notes, come from the ancient apostolic sees. In this same passage, Irenaeus raises Rome as the greatest example of these sees:

But since it would be too long, in a work like this, to list the succession in all the churches, we shall take only one of them, the church that is greatest, most ancient, and known to all, founded and set up by the two most glorious apostles Peter and Paul at Rome, while showing that the tradition and the faith it proclaims to men comes down through the successions of bishops even to us; thus we shall put to shame all who in any way, through infatuation or vainglory or blindness and a wicked doctrine, gather together wrongly.

As Robert Eno states in a background essay for L/RC VI, for Irenaeus, “the Roman Church, however glorious, is not unique. It is not the only one of its kind, but it is the outstanding example of its kind, namely the apostolic sees.” For Catholics, this early admission by Irenaeus of the importance of Rome serves to bolster the assurance that the church’s transmission of the faith has been kept immune from error in specific beliefs and teachings.

Thus, Lutherans could draw on certain aspects of an Irenaean stance that bolster the view that the teaching authority of the church rests in its ability to pass on the apostolic faith from generation to generation; Catholics could draw on other aspects of the same Irenaean stance in order to claim a position for Rome in such a transmission. In

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484 Irenaeus, Grant, 124-7.
485 Irenaeus, Grant, 124-25.
both cases, the ecumenical convergence reached in L/RC VI cited above regarding apostolic tradition and the Ministries and structures responsible for teaching doctrine is due in part to the joint examination of the patristic sources which examined the function and purpose of the church’s teaching authority.

The function and purpose of the church’s teaching authority is central to L/RC VI’s work toward convergence. Lutherans and Catholics can agree that the function and purpose of teaching authority is much akin to that illustrated by the writings of Clement, Irenaeus, and Tertullian; that is, the church’s teaching authority is to make clear the central tenets of the faith for the purpose of right belief, this being experienced in the life of the church itself over against either internal division (Clement) or falsenesses externally foisted onto the church (Irenaeus and Tertullian). The struggle is to make ecumenical sense of the historically situated position of this teaching authority and its jurisdictional potentialities in the life of the church. The examples of Innocent I and Gelasius serve to show how these factors came to bear on the ancient church. And the implicit use of communion ecclesiology in L/RC VI gestures toward how they might bear on the Lutheran and Catholic churches. This is to say that L/RC VI’s implicit use of communion ecclesiology provides a framework in which to view afresh the ways in which Lutherans and Catholics conceive of and embody teaching authority. Likewise this use of communion ecclesiology, coupled with the use of the fathers, yields a means by which both Lutherans can appreciate and find worth in the institutional magisterium found in the Catholic Church and Catholics can realize and appreciate the benefit of continual mindfulness that the teaching authority of the church is always in service to the Word of God.
Thus, the fathers are used in the argument of L/RC VI, and not merely as sources for constructing a history that serve as background to the argument. Moreover, the fathers so used are an aid to the L/RC in addressing the teaching authority of the church as an issue of the apostolicity of the church. In conclusion, I will cite again a key sentence from L/RC VI’s Common Statement, “It is through Scripture, tradition, and teaching authority that the Spirit enables the believing community to settle disputes about the gospel.”487 It is this line which aptly displays both the function and purpose of teaching authority and the implicit use of communion ecclesiology. It is beneficial that L/RC VI does not equate tradition and teaching authority with either the creeds or the ministerial/episcopal office, since both tradition and teaching authority reside in both the creeds and the ministerial/episcopal office. Such an equation would limit or restrain the position and role of the creeds or the ministerial/episcopal office, locking in univocal meanings for them that would diminish their effects for the life of the church.

The teaching authority of the church is the focus for the ecumenism of L/RC VI because the church is the place where the differences in doctrine are worked out. However, it is the teaching authority of the church that is the key element. In terms of infallibility, L/RC VI states, “Whatever infallibility is ascribed to Scripture, the Church, or the pope, it is wholly dependent on the power of God’s Word in the gospel.”488 For Catholics, this has meant that the infallibility of the pope is set in the context of the infallibility of the church (as articulated by Vatican I in Pastor Aeternus 4.9), which as we saw above is described in very similar ways to that by which Lutherans speak of the

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487 L/RC VI, 35.
488 L/RC VI, 35.
indefectibility of the church." For Lutherans, given this shift in position and presentation by Catholics, there is a renewed awareness of the need to view the “Ministry of the bishop of Rome … as a service under the authority of the Word of God.” Further, Lutherans should view “the doctrine of infallibility [as] an expression of confidence that the Spirit of God abides in his Church and guides it in the truth.” This last point heightens a further awareness for Lutherans of “the importance of an ecumenical or universal teaching Ministry within the Church.”

*Fathers as Sources of Understanding in an Indirect Communion Ecclesiology*

As L/RC VI made use of the church fathers in the ecumenical argument itself, so too does L/RC IX, on Scripture and Tradition. As I wrote above, L/RC IX claims that the church is the fundamental context – indeed, it calls the church community – in which the Word of God known through Scripture and Tradition is revealed and understood. A key difference between L/RC VI and L/RC IX, however, is that the latter makes only oblique reference to any particular church father, referring instead to developments in the patristic period: developments of doctrine and Scripture. This may be explained by the fact that L/RC IX is different in form from any of the other rounds: there are no appended

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\[489\] *Pastor Aeternus* 4.9 states, “We … teach and explain that the dogma has been divinely revealed: that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when carrying out the duty of the pastor and teacher of all Christians in accord with his supreme apostolic authority he explains a doctrine of faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, thought the divine assistance promised him in blessed Peter, operates with that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer wished that His church be instructed in defining doctrine on faith and morals; and so such definitions of the Roman Pontiff from himself, but not from the consensus of the Church, are unalterable” (Denzinger §1839).

\[490\] L/RC VI, 36.

\[491\] L/RC VI, 66.
background papers or essays prepared in advance of the dialogue work, only citations of already existing studies and documents. The Common Statement stands by itself.

The references made to the early church, however, are key to the ecumenical argument of L/RC IX. They are necessary for the procedural tack taken in that they are used as sources of understanding the developments of both doctrine and the Scriptures. In this way they have helped to remove the problematic of interpretation of the Council of Trent on the topic of Scripture and Tradition. In a procedural move akin to L/RC VI, L/RC IX does not take up the two issues of Scripture and Tradition, try to formulate definitions or descriptions of them, and then argue for the primacy of one over the other or how they may come to a condominium based on such definitions. Instead, the strategy of L/RC IX is evident in its title, *Word of God: Scripture and Tradition*, wherein the determinative factor is the Word of God, in relationship to which Scripture and Tradition must find their function and purpose.492

L/RC IX’s points of agreement reached are dependent upon the indirect use of communion ecclesiology. This is expressed in the jointly held view that the church provides the fullest and most elemental context in which God enables believers to understand the Word of God. The ecumenical work on the part of Lutherans toward this point entails a recognition of those concretized and particular aspects of the church’s life (e.g., the magisterium) necessary for this to occur. For Catholics, it has meant being more fully aware of how the Word of God itself authorizes the authoritative interpreter of Scripture, i.e., the magisterium.

492 This strategy is, as we will see below, inspired by and based in part on Vatican II’s *Dei Verbum*, a document which allowed for a *rapprochement* with the Lutheran understanding of *sola scriptura*. 
Thus both the Lutheran and Catholic positions are balanced, though with their own emphases. The Lutheran position is balanced because it acknowledges that Scripture needs to be set in the ecclesial context. The Catholic position is balanced because it acknowledges that both Scripture and tradition are of one greater reality, the revelation of the Word of God.

However, as L/RC IX explains, the Lutheran position is incomplete, and the Catholic in need of reform. The incompleteness of the Lutheran position shows itself in that exigent ecclesial manifestations are slight; perhaps the greatest instance of this is the loss of the episcopate for the majority of Lutheran churches. The reform necessary for the Catholic position can be stated as the need for the hierarchical authorities to recognize in the fullest manner that ecclesial interpretation of Scripture is authorized only by God’s Word. Both of these positions, as we shall show below, are echoes of the patristic era, and the patristic sources are used in the constructive ecumenical argument as sources for understanding, sources that helped remove the obstacle of the Scripture/Tradition dichotomy.

For the Lutherans, “the sola scriptura principle not only does not rule out but demands continuing interpretation and application of Scripture.” This continuing interpretation is done in accordance with the preceding Tradition of the church, since both the Augsburg Confession claims the patristic tradition is reflected in its teachings and the Apology notes that church polity and hierarchy are indeed beneficial for such continuing interpretation, and the church fathers had “good and useful” reasons for

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494 L/RC IX, 40.
495 L/RC IX, 35.
instituting them. Lutherans further elucidated on this position from the time of the Reformation to the point where it has become part of the “measure of agreement” between Lutherans and Catholics. As L/RC IX states:

Lutherans adhere to apostolic and patristic tradition in the form of creeds, christological and trinitarian doctrines, church order, and the like, insofar as they are normed by Scripture, and they allow for developments in history such as the Lutheran Confessions according to the same rule. They attach great importance to oral proclamation and affirm the legitimacy of episcopal authority and the permissibility of human traditions.

There has been development for Catholics as well. At the time of Trent, “Catholics … asserted … that Scripture on its own is neither sufficient nor clear, thus making necessary the writings of the fathers and interpretation by the community.”

Presently, however, the issues have taken a different form, and the Catholic position has been nuanced to view Scripture and Tradition not as two sources of revelation (a typical rendering of Trent), but rather “more as a functioning unity, with Scripture having a nourishing and ruling function while tradition interprets and hands on the whole living experience of Christ testified to by Scripture.” This leads to the Catholic side of the “measure of agreement” mentioned above:

Catholics, by contrast, affirm the centrality of Scripture as the word of God for the life of the church. They have a growing appreciation of its normative character as

496 L/RC IX, 36. The Conclusion of Part One of the CA states, “Since, then, this teaching is clearly grounded in Holy Scripture and is, moreover, neither against nor contrary to the universal Christian church – or even the Roman church – so far as can be observed in the writings of the Fathers, we think that our opponents cannot disagree with us in the articles set for the above” (Book of Concord, Kolb and Wengert, 58).

It is not explicitly stated in the Apology what the Reformers meant by this phrase, “good and useful” reasons for instituting the church polity and hierarchy that they did. Presumably, the Reformers understood that the church fathers did so, surely according to the will of God, so that they might keep the good order of the church, for this is what the Reformers thought should have been the case in the sixteenth century – the church should be organized for the sake of good order.

497 L/RC IX, 40.
498 L/RC IX, 38.
499 L/RC IX, 39.
it nourishes and rules preaching and the whole of religion. They no longer speak of tradition as a separate source of revelation. While affirming that there is growth in the understanding of the realities of the words which have been handed down, they see tradition as fundamentally this handing down and thus as a process of transmitting something already given.\footnote{L/RC IX, 40.}

This “measure of agreement” between Lutherans and Catholics draws upon two characteristic insistences. Lutherans, in postulating the \textit{sola scriptura} principle, were not arguing for a sundering of Scripture and its interpretation; indeed, as cited above, the interpretation is continual. What aids in that interpretation is the other Reformation \textit{solae}: \textit{sola gratia}, \textit{solus Christus}, \textit{sola fide}. These make up a kind of hermeneutical matrix in which Scripture is rightly interpreted. We might even assert that these \textit{solae} are the components of a Lutheran view of Tradition, so that the proper interpretation of Scripture comes from the interpreter taking what has been handed on from before regarding the primary of grace working so that Christ might be made clear and the result will be the awakening of faith. It is this matrix of \textit{solae} that gives Lutherans guidance in attributing authority to post-biblical articles of faith. This matrix could be analogous to what some of the Reformers called a ‘patristic consensus’ or a ‘consensus of the first five centuries’.\footnote{L/RC IX, 45.} In addition, L/RC IX notes that Lutherans use this matrix for interpretation of Scripture not so much to find and formulate teachings (as is the Catholic emphasis), but “as a source and mandate for the continued preaching of the gospel. Scripture is the Word \textit{from} God to humans which in turn mandates the appropriate speaking of the Word in the present (the Augustinian tradition of \textit{enarratio}).”\footnote{L/RC IX, 27-8. The endnote to this line explains this Augustinian tradition as one extending into the medieval era and consisting of three steps: “to explain the text (\textit{narratio}); to take the message out of the text (\textit{ex-narratio}); and to apply the message in public (\textit{enarratio}),” (L/RC IX, 54, note 21). However,
Catholics, with the dogmatic constitution *Dei Verbum*, argued at Vatican II, “Holy Tradition and Holy Scripture form the one sacred deposit of God’s Word which has been entrusted to the church.” Yet this deposit is not static; the conciliar fathers meant something more dynamic since they describe Scripture and Tradition as flowing “from the same divine wellspring” which is in fact the gospel, the very Word of God.

Remaining with the image, we might say that *Dei Verbum* insists the flow be monitored, assisted, served, or even regulated by the church’s magisterium. Notwithstanding this, the Word of God has primacy. Thus, the Lutheran matrix of *sola* can be seen as a form of the regulatory function of tradition and the Catholic increased awareness of Scripture as acknowledging the preeminent status of the Word of God.

These characteristic insistences are reflective of the early church’s life, and thus the fathers are used in support of the ecumenical argument. As L/RC IX itself describes the various means by which the tradition of the gospel was handed down from generation

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L/RC IX does not give any more information about this tradition. Presumably, at least, we can suggest that this tradition started with Augustine himself and his *Enarratio in Psalmos*, in which the bishop of Hippo interprets the speaker of the Psalms to be Christ himself, in some manner or another. That is, the Psalms are interpreted figurally: Christ is to be the explanation of the text; he is the message extracted; and he is brought to bear on the present, public circumstance.

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503 *Dei Verbum* 10, quoted from L/RC IX, 32.

504 *Dei Verbum* 9.

505 The key question for the Lutheran is in what ways is this sense of Tradition mediated. As I mentioned above, there were no published background papers with L/RC IX. However, one of the Lutheran participants of L/RC IX, Karlfried Froehlich, wrote a short essay in 1991 in which he reflects on the then-in-progress ninth round. See Karlfried Froehlich, “The Doctrine of Tradition as a Doctrine about Scripture and the Church,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 28:3 (Summer 1991): 466-71. He describes a Lutheran doctrine of tradition as being governed by a sense of the gospel as the center of the triad: scripture, tradition, and church. This is the typical Lutheran stress on the oral gospel taking precedent over all else caught up in tension with the normative written form of the gospel, scripture. While the oral precedes and follows the written, it is the latter which is “the primary, normative form of [the] tradition” (468). In describing this Lutheran position, Froehlich claims, “One could hear in these formulations an echo of the *de facto* superiority of oral tradition over written doctrine in the schools of the ancient world, of which we have an engaged advocate in Clement of Alexandria” (468). In the end, Froehlich’s short piece argues, “our understanding of norms, scripture, and the living witness of the church presupposes a clear recognition of the formative reality and the theological challenge presented by ‘tradition’ before and after our norms began functioning. In short, it presupposes a thoroughly historical consciousness” (471).
to generation in the early church, it was done so through “the community’s memory of Jesus … the texts in which the communities of the first centuries recognize their memory of Jesus, together with writings setting forth apostolic teaching … teachings, disciplines, and creedal formulations … [and] ecclesiastical structures and offices.”

L/RC IX quotes Athanasius in explaining how it is that the creeds have become a resource for overcoming the disagreements between the two churches, “we agree that the Nicene dogma of the homoousios successfully ‘gathered up the sense of the Scriptures,’ to borrow the expression of Athanasius, and to that extent expresses the Word of God.”

As these reflections demonstrate, there are elements of the life of the early church that are central to the ecumenical arguments of L/RC IX in coming to a “measure of agreement.” In the terms I have been using, these elements are used as sources for understanding the relationship between Scripture and Tradition in order to help take away the obstacles between Lutherans and Catholics.

The accomplishment of L/RC IX is an agreement between Lutherans and Catholics, the essence of which is captured in the title of L/RC IX, *The Word of God: Scripture and Tradition*. The Word of God is constituted by three elements, as “above all, the eternal Son of God … also God’s message … [and] a written word, the Holy Scripture.” Summarily, Tradition is defined “in its elementary sense as the act of transmitting the divine message from person to person,” and involves two aspects: a process in a community, the handing on of the Word of God in the church, and the

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507 L/RC IX, 44. The phrase was initially quoted by John Courtney Murray in L/RC I, 17.
508 L/RC IX, 23.
content of what is handed on, namely the totality of the gracious presence of Christ. Here, especially, in that the process of transmission of the Tradition occurs in the church as ‘community’ we have L/RC IX’s indirect use of communion ecclesiology. A way to stress the agreement is to say that Lutherans and Catholics jointly confess that Scripture as Word of God has preeminence in the life of the church. The Lutheran emphasis would be on Scripture, whereas the Catholic would be in the life of the church. Both emphases are found in the development of the early church.

**Summary and Conclusion**

To begin this summary and conclusion I will present two tables before moving on to comment on the more specific uses of the fathers in the arguments of the rounds. Table 4 shows where in the documents of the dialogue rounds the fathers appeared. The L/RC used the fathers in the Common Statements of both rounds six and nine (including the Catholic reflections of L/RC VI) and in three background papers for round six. Recall that round nine did not have any background essays. It is interesting to note that the fathers appear in more than just the Common Statements and specifically patristic studies; they also show up in essays that are directed on other subjects.

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509 L/RC IX, 25 and 36.
Table 5 gives a list of the specific fathers used in these two rounds. As in the tables in the previous chapter, I have noted the sources used with greater frequency with *bold italics* and marked the ones used jointly by Lutherans and Catholics with a ✔. For L/RC VI, Clement and Irenaeus are the fathers which feature foremost in the dialogue’s argument. Clement is important as an early example of how the gospel and its authority are summarized in the *regula fidei*, a formulaic expression of the faith. Irenaeus is used in a similar fashion, i.e., as an example of one who recognized the expressed the authority of Christian teaching in creedal formulations and summaries.
TABLE 5 – CHURCH FATHERS AND OTHER ANCIENT SOURCES FOR L/RC VI AND IX GIVEN IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L/RC VI – Teaching Authority and Infallibility in the Church</th>
<th>L/RC IX – Word of God: Scripture and Tradition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Clement ✔</td>
<td>Athanasius</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tertullian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Irenaeus ✔</td>
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<td>Cyprian</td>
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<td>Jerome</td>
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<td>Augustine (Augustinian tradition)</td>
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<td>Pope Siricius</td>
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<td>Pope Zosimus</td>
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<td>Pope Boniface I</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pope Gelasius</td>
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To conclude this section further, we saw how both L/RC VI and IX made use of the church fathers and the early church in their constructive ecumenical arguments. L/RC VI used specific fathers as precedents in order to expand the concept of teaching authority and its relationship to infallibility. This expansion, in turn, helped both Lutherans and Catholics to view teaching authority and infallibility in terms of their function and purpose in the life of the church, a function and purpose which exist within each of the Lutheran and Catholic churches and is shared between them. L/RC IX used the early church developments of both doctrine and Scripture as sources for understanding Scripture and Tradition that helped to remove the obstacle of Scripture and Tradition as a dichotomy (itself arising from questions about how to understand the Council of Trent on this matter). This aided L/RC IX in the formulation that the Word of God is revealed through both Scripture and Tradition, with the first being preeminent yet the second as necessary.
In correlation to these uses of the fathers, both of these rounds related the subject matter under examination directly to the life and structure of the church. L/RC VI implicitly uses communion ecclesiology in that it recognizes that the function and purpose of teaching authority exist within both the Lutheran and Catholic churches, yet are something that is shared between them. This sharing is a mark of communion ecclesiology, namely that the greater koinonia of the church includes teaching authority as a necessary component, one which extends between Lutherans and Catholics in some way. L/RC IX indirectly uses communion ecclesiology in that it recognizes the church as the community in which the Word of God is revealed and understood through both Scripture and Tradition, with Scripture being preeminent. As I described earlier, even as Lutherans and Catholics would agree to such, the Lutheran emphasis would be on Scripture in the life of the church while the Catholic emphasis would be on Scripture in the life of the church.

As a final comment for both rounds, I think it is significant that there are distinctive emphases from each the Lutherans and Catholics, the tension over which is not so quickly eased merely by joint reference to the fathers or the early church. These emphases and the tension between them is summarized well by the Lutheran theologian and ecumenist Mickey Mattox:

Apart … from an agreement on the relationship between a self-authenticating Scripture and an infallible teaching office in the church, there can be no real agreement, no genuine consensus even of a “differentiated” kind, between Lutherans and Roman Catholics on the issue of Scripture and tradition. This reminds us that the question of authoritative teaching in relation to the church and its ministry has long bedeviled Lutheran-Roman Catholic ecumenism. These
questions are in fact so deeply interrelated that the solution of one probably requires and presumes the simultaneous solution to the other.\textsuperscript{510}

Mattox’s proposal, at least for Lutherans, to continue working toward such a “simultaneous solution,” entails observing that much of the life in Lutheran churches is taken up with piety and practice rather than with direct biblical instruction: the example given is infant baptism. The question would then arise, to what extent and with what meaning could such piety and practices be mandated by way of an authoritative teaching office for Lutherans. Mattox’s proposal deserves attention, but for the purposes of the current study it needs further grounding. Such a proposal needs to be set explicitly within the context of an ecclesiology. As we will see in the next chapter, an explicit understanding of communion ecclesiology affords many benefits to ecumenical work, though to be sure it should not be understood as a monolithic ecclesiology but as one to which Lutherans and Catholics each lend distinctive characteristics.

CHAPTER 7
THE CHURCH FATHERS
IN CONSTRUCTIVE ECUMENICAL ARGUMENT, PART 2
THE DIRECT USE OF COMMUNION ECCLESIOLOGY

Introduction

There are four rounds of the U.S. Lutheran-Catholic dialogue that make direct use of aspects and versions of communion ecclesiology. For three of them, L/RC III (The Eucharist as Sacrifice), L/RC IV (Eucharist and Ministry), and L/RC V (Papal Primacy and the Universal Church), there is a growing awareness of communion ecclesiology and how it might provide a defining but not confining understanding of the church. At some times, facets of communion ecclesiology arise in the Common Statements of these rounds themselves; at other times, they are commented on in background essays and in the participants’ discussion held during the meetings of the dialogue members which then have influence on the Statements. For the last round examined here, L/RC X (The Church as Koinonia of Salvation: Its Structures and Ministries), communion ecclesiology becomes the prism through which the structures and ministries of the church are viewed. Communion ecclesiology is used not as a monolithic and restrictive
definition of the church, but as a vision of the church which allows for legitimately
diverse views of its ministries and structures.511

The L/RC uses the church fathers in different ways in these four rounds as it
produces its constructive ecumenical argument. The dialogue uses the fathers as sources
for understanding a point of doctrine or a theological issue. It uses them as models for
practice, both practice more broadly (in the case of the Eucharist) and practice more
narrowly (in the case of the papacy). It also uses them as models for how to conceive of
a theological issue, in this case, apostolicity. Finally, the L/RC uses the fathers as
precedent both for developing a new notion (here regarding the papacy) and for
emphasizing comparable functions of various offices of the ordained (the presbyteral and
the episcopal).

The four rounds examined in this chapter have the clearest focus on the issues
surrounding the apostolicity of the church of all the rounds of the L/RC. In addressing
each of these issues – the Eucharist, Ministry, the papal office, and the episcopacy – the
L/RC used the fathers to beneficial effect. In each case, the L/RC’s use of the fathers was
important in producing a constructive ecumenical argument. Since the issues
surrounding the apostolicity of the church are the key ecumenical issues currently, it is
noteworthy that the L/RC found the fathers to be so helpful. The next chapter, my

511 This last sentence is informed significantly by Dennis Doyle’s book Communion Ecclesiology: Vision
and Versions (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 2000). Doyle expounds on how communion ecclesiology is a
vision of and for the church. But there are many versions of this vision – sometimes at odds with one
another – which need mediation in order to strive for a more inclusive vision. Doyle writes as a Roman
Catholic, giving his greatest attention to communion ecclesiology in Roman Catholic theology. However,
he is also an ecumenist and does explore some Orthodox and Protestant versions and how they interact with
Catholic ones.
conclusion, will revisit some of these issues and offer some assessment for how and why the fathers have been so useful.

L/RC III argues for convergence and consensus between Lutherans and Catholics on the Eucharist as sacrifice and on the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Communion ecclesiology is present in L/RC III though not in a robust fashion. A background essay raises it, and it becomes important in addressing the question of what is the church which participates in the eucharistic sacrifice. Even so, this relates to only one of the three uses of the fathers in the round, the first use where the fathers are a source of understanding which helped to remove the obstacle for misunderstanding between the Lutherans and Catholics concerning the notion of eucharistic sacrifice. L/RC III also uses the fathers as sources for understanding how Christ is worthy of praise, an understanding that supports the round’s stress on the qualitative assessment of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist over the quantitative (i.e., that the importance is on the fact that Christ is present in the Eucharist over and against any formulations for how long he’s present). Finally, L/RC III uses the fathers as models for sacramental practice which emphasize a focus on the primary use of the reserved Eucharist, for communing the sick.

L/RC IV argues for the legitimacy of the Lutheran order of Ministry and that Catholics can and ought to recognize it as such. In L/RC IV communion ecclesiology was instrumental in shaping the constructive proposal regarding the difference and relationship between ministry (with a lower-case “m”) and Ministry (with an upper-case “M”), the former designating the purpose and work of the entire church and the latter designating office(s) set aside for particular forms of service. This terminology and distinction helps the fourth round to use the fathers as models for how to conceive of the
idea of apostolicity in ways that broaden the concept beyond how it has typically been conceived by the Lutheran and Catholic sides to a fuller account that takes into view many more aspects of the church’s life. Indeed, a whole array of patristic evidence is sifted in order to demonstrate that there were many and variable expressions of eucharistic Ministry and apostolic successions in the early church, expressions which are pertinent to the ecumenical relationship. Thus, the fathers are used in the constructive ecumenical argument that the Lutheran order of Ministry can be recognized by Catholics as legitimate.\textsuperscript{512}

By the time of L/RC V, communion ecclesiology is gaining wider theological purchase. Two background essays to this round deal explicitly with communio, and with a patristic focus as well.\textsuperscript{513} These pieces help to shape the constructive ecumenical argument by presenting a vision of the church as communio in which the “Petrine function” of the papacy could be placed and could work. In using the phrase “Petrine function,” L/RC V means to shift attention from the juridical aspects of the papacy to the ministerial aspects, thereby emphasizing the role the papacy has to play in leading and serving the church universal. This fifth round uses the fathers as precedent for formulating and stressing this “Petrine function” and as models for putting the “Petrine function” into practice. In doing so, the fathers and early church history are mined to show how the two crucial factors of Petrine imagery and Roman prominence amalgamated in the papacy.

L/RC X argues that the church is a communion that shares in the life of salvation and is in turn called upon to share that life with the world. The structures of the church are best understood as being in service to that mission of sharing. L/RC X is the clearest case where *communio* or *koinonia* shapes and guides the constructive ecumenical argument. Here *koinonia* is presented as the vision of the church within which the structures of the church are discussed. L/RC X uses this vision of *koinonia* to argue that there is an asymmetry between Lutherans and Catholics regarding which ordained office comprises the fullest expression of ecclesial authority, whether it is, as for the Lutherans, the presbyteral, or for Catholics, the episcopal. The tenth round uses the patristic development of the episcopacy and the church fathers’ theological assessments of it as precedent in order to emphasize the comparable functions of Ministry between Lutherans and Catholics which in turn serves as a basis for the asymmetrical argument constructed in the dialogue.

L/RC III – *The Eucharist as Sacrifice* (1967)

The title of L/RC III, *The Eucharist as Sacrifice*, only introduces the reader to one of the two topics of the round; in addition to sacrifice the issue of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist is central. These were the two main divisive issues of the sixteenth century regarding the Eucharist, so the dialogue decided to address them in the newly irenic ecumenical context. As the Common Statement claims, L/RC III “does not try to treat the sacrament of the altar comprehensively.”\(^{514}\) For each aspect of sacrifice and

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presence, L/RC III reveals points on which Lutherans and Catholics have agreed since the sixteenth century as well as points on which they have either disagreed or misunderstood one another but now can come to consensus. L/RC III uses the fathers in two main ways: as sources for understanding an issue and as models for practice. The fathers are used as sources for understanding eucharistic sacrifice that helped remove an obstacle of misunderstanding between Lutherans and Catholics and as sources of understanding Christ’s presence in the Eucharist that stressed the importance of the qualitative over the quantitative (that *whenever* Christ is present in the eucharistic meal, he is worthy of praise). The fathers are also used as models for sacramental practice that focus on the primary use of the reservation of the sacrament, for communing the sick.

For the first major focus, on the Eucharist as sacrifice, L/RC III notes two affirmations which each church has held since the Reformation: Jesus Christ gave himself for the justification of the world in the sacrifice of the cross, and “the eucharist is the church’s sacrifice of praise and self-offering or oblation.” The general category of issues that have caused division and disagreement between the churches is that of whether the church offers Christ in the Eucharist, and if so, how. The Catholics have answered in the affirmative to the first and explicated the second, while Lutherans have traditionally answered in the negative to the first, making the second question moot. Lutherans were concerned to safeguard any aspect of worship from becoming an act of works-righteousness. Given these differences and what transpired in the third round, it appears that the main theological shift occurred with the Lutherans.

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515 “Statement,” L/RC III, 188.
L/RC III notes four derivative areas where convergence between the churches either has taken place or is taking place: the unrepeatability of the sacrifice of the cross, propitiation, the manner in which both churches conduct the Eucharist, and the way in which the church may offer Christ in the Eucharist.\(^5\)\(^1\)\(^6\) For the first three of these areas, the fathers are not used in the constructive ecumenical argument. It is in overcoming the fourth that L/RC III remembers the early church and presses it into ecumenical service in the ecumenical argument of the dialogue round. The fathers are used as sources for understanding eucharistic sacrifice which helped remove the obstacle of divisive sacramental language.

This fourth issue is the way in which the church may offer Christ in the Eucharist. Here we touch on the essential question of the nature of the church. What is the church that it can make such a sacrifice? What relationship is there between Christ and the church that allows for, and even calls for, such a sacrifice? In answer, L/RC III states:

> The members of the body of Christ are united through Christ with God and with one another in such a way that they become participants in his worship, his self-offering, his sacrifice to the Father. Through this union between Christ and Christians, the eucharistic assembly “offers Christ” by consenting in the power of the Holy Spirit to be offered by him to the Father.\(^5\)\(^1\)\(^7\)

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\(^5\)\(^1\)\(^6\) The first issue overcome is the unrepeatability of the sacrifice of the cross. While there might have been differences in the past, in the present day both Lutherans and Catholics can affirm that Christ’s sacrifice was once-and-for-all. The second issue overcome is propitiation. While the dialogue does not espouse a particular view or theory of the atonement, it is clear that both Lutherans and Catholics hold to the reconciliation that comes from the efficacious celebration of the Eucharist. The only point held in suspension is the question of whether and how this propitiation may extend to the dead as well as the living. The third issue overcome is in fact a set: the actual manner in which both churches conduct the Eucharist. With the renewal of liturgical studies and the liturgical movement of the early twentieth century accompanied by the liturgical changes that arose from Vatican II, each church has come to recognize in the other the real celebration of the Eucharist – indeed this was spelled out in L/RC IV, on the Eucharist and Ministry.

\(^5\)\(^1\)\(^7\) L/RC III, 189.
It is important to notice the trinitarian and *communio* language in this passage: members are united with God and one another through Christ, and because of this union and the power of the Holy Spirit the gathered believers are able to offer Christ to the Father. As we will see below, a background essay to L/RC III highlights the emerging sense of the church as *communio*, a sense that seemed to inform passages like this one. The quotation just cited, interestingly, warranted the longest footnote of the Common Statement in which we find reference to works from both Vatican II and Luther.

It is the citation from Vatican II’s *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests* that relies on Augustine’s *City of God* 10.6 to support the view that the church, by its connection to Christ, offers itself and thereby offers Christ in the Eucharist. The footnote goes on to say that the 1947 encyclical *Mediator Dei* uses that same text from Augustine for essentially the same point.\(^{518}\) It is important to note that this is a crucial theological issue – the relationship between the triune God and the church – one which calls for the church’s sacrifice in the celebration of the Eucharist. Moreover, it is precisely here that there is support from Luther himself (as this same footnote from the Common Statement cites his *Treatise on the New Testament*) and explanations from Catholicism in the form of official teaching (Vatican II and *Mediator Dei*) and views from reputable individual theologians (such as Karl Rahner).

In this array of sources, it is Augustine who underlies two of the Catholic references, references which are cited as a way to coordinate with the view of Luther.

The citation from Augustine used here comes from his *City of God* 10.6. In this Book 10,\(^{518}\) The footnote is #6. It begins on page 189 and takes up the majority of the printed text on page 190. In addition to Luther, Vatican II, and *Mediator Dei*, Karl Rahner is referenced as a (then) present-day Catholic theologian who expresses the same point regarding the involvement of the church in the “sacrifice of the Mass.”
Augustine is comparing and contrasting Christian worship with Platonic philosophy and theology, essentially arguing that Christian worship is superior because it takes a proper view of the body in relationship to the spirit. The chapters immediately preceding, chapters 4-5, argue that while God desires and accepts sacrifices, they do not make up any loss for the divine, nor do they bring any additional gain to the life of the Trinity. Humans cannot bring a sacrifice by themselves that will make any difference. The only way God will heed and accept a sacrifice is if it is a divine action. Hence, any sacrifice given to God is necessarily a divine action. So it is that the sacrifice of the Mass is needed; and precisely because the divine sacrifice is the only effective sacrifice, the church is brought into the agency of the sacrifice itself. That is to say, the point about the church offering the Mass is made especially so that the agency of the church is not the sole agency. The church can only offer the Mass because of the agency of Christ. Upon this both Lutherans and Catholics can agree, and it is Augustine who provides a theological basis from the early church for such an agreement.

For the second major focus of L/RC III, the presence of Christ in the Mass, the fathers are again used as sources of understanding for forging a theological agreement between Lutherans and Catholics. L/RC III notes some significant places where Lutherans and Catholics have had agreement over the centuries. Both acknowledge that Jesus Christ is truly present under the signs of bread and wine, though there have been (and most likely will be) many ways of expressing this over the course of the church’s history. The point is that both churches hold to Christ’s presence as not merely “spatial
or natural” nor only “commemorative or figurative.” This presence comes about only through the power of the Holy Spirit, and Christ is present in the entire eucharistic action (not more especially at one moment or another).

In considering the presence of Christ in the Mass, one area of divergence between Lutherans and Catholics over the centuries has been eucharistic worship. However, L/RC III argues that this is a divergence overcome. There are two particular aspects of this area of divergence where the fathers have been used as key sources and models in making an ecumenical argument for overcoming the divergence: for the first Augustine is used as a source for an understanding of how Christ is worthy of praise that stresses the qualitative view of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist over the quantitative; and for the second the early church practice of eucharistic reservation is used as a model for how to understand the primary reason for reserving the sacrament, namely to commune the sick.

L/RC III is careful not to place any quantitative judgment on the duration of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist; instead it makes a statement about the qualitative. It

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519 “Statement” L/RC III, 192.
520 “Statement” L/RC III, 191-193. However, there are three areas of divergence between the two churches that have been overcome: eucharistic worship, presence of Christ under both species, and transubstantiation. On the last, while Lutherans may have misgivings over their understanding of transubstantiation as containing a rationalized attempt at describing Christ’s presence, and being the only manner in which to do so, the Catholics of L/RC III suggest that “contemporary Catholic expositions … of transubstantiation [intend] to affirm the fact of Christ’s presence and of the change which takes place, and is not an attempt to explain how Christ becomes present” (L/RC III, 196). So, Lutherans and Catholics are agreed that indeed some transformation occurs in the bread and wine of the altar, and both churches agree that there are myriad of appropriate ways of expressing this transformation. On the second, it is clear that the renewed practice of the Roman Catholic Church of distributing both the bread and the wine has gone far to assuage any disagreement here. The justification for this renewed practice does not come from the ancient church, but from Eastern practice coupled with both an acknowledgement of such a practice in the history of the Western church as well as recognition “that this practice better expresses the sign of the mystery of eucharistic presence” (L/RC III, 195). Footnote 32 from this same paragraph reads in part, “[S]ome scholars hold that communion under both kinds has not always been the practice within the church even in ancient times. For example, J. Jeremias (The Eucharistic Words of Jesus [New York, 1964] p. 115) suggests that ‘the breaking of the bread’ in the New Testament refers to communion under one species. Other scholars disagree.”
states, “We are further agreed that as long as Christ remains sacramentally present, worship, reverence and adoration are appropriate.” In other words, while we might not be able to ascertain with certainty the exact beginning and end of the time frame in which Christ is present in the elements of bread and wine, the primary concern truly becomes the confession that for whatever that duration is, Christ is worthy of praise. The textual support for this agreement comes from the Council of Trent, the Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord, Luther, and Augustine.

The Augustinian reference is to his On Psalm 98, and while fairly oblique, this work exposes the ways by which the Father has made known the salvation of the world. Psalm 98:5 commands the believers to worship the Lord’s footstool because he is holy. Augustine puzzles over how Christians are to worship the Lord’s footstool which is clearly the earth. But he goes on to explain how Christ himself is meant:

In my uncertainty I turn to Christ, for he it is whom I am seeking in this psalm; and then I discover how, without idolatry, the earth may be worshiped, how God’s footstool may be adored without impiety. He took earth from earth, because flesh comes from the earth, and he received his flesh from the flesh of Mary. He walked here below in that flesh, and even gave us that same flesh to eat for our salvation.

Just after this, Augustine expounds on how the earth is rightfully adored for the sake of Christ, because he is holy. Augustine writes:

Who is holy? He is whose honor you worship that footstool. So too he does not want your thoughts to remain fixed on the flesh when you worship him; he wills you to be given life by the spirit. That is why he says, It is the spirit that give life; the flesh is of no avail. Yet when the Lord pointed this out, he had been speaking directly about his flesh. He had said, Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you will not have life in you (Jn 6:54).
Thus, Augustine explains not only how the earth is worthy of adoration as the Lord’s footstool because of his flesh but also that Christ is present through the spirit in his very own flesh that he offers to all believers. Returning to the Lutheran/Catholic dialogue, even though it has not been stated very clearly historically, both Lutherans and Catholics can agree upon the need for worship, reverence, and adoration of Christ because he is truly present in the celebration of the Eucharist.

On the issue of duration, a specific father and a specific work of his were cited, but on the issue of reservation, L/RC III only makes a general reference to the patristic era. The early church practice of reserving the sacrament primarily for the sake of communing the sick who are not able to be physically present with the worshipping community is used as a model for sacramental practice that can inform and orient present-day Lutheran and Catholic practice. Holding this practice as the primary reason for reserving the Eucharist, both Lutherans and Catholics can agree that Christ remains present beyond the immediate liturgy of the Eucharist. Both churches have practiced this and continue to do so. Here the early church is cited with authority:

Following a practice attested in the early church, Lutherans may distribute the elements from the congregational communion service to the sick in private communion … Also in harmony with a eucharistic practice attested in the early church, Roman Catholics have traditionally reserved the consecrated host for communicating the sick, which, according to the Instruction of May 25, 1967, is the “primary and original purpose” of reservation.\footnote{524}{“Statement,” L/RC III, 194.}

The subsequent adoration of the eucharistic elements held in reserve in the sanctuary is a later development, and Catholics rightly acknowledge that such a practice is a secondary end. So, even though this is a rather general reference to the early church without any
specific situation or text cited, it is precisely early church practice that is the model for at least a preliminary agreement on what habits and rituals should occur regarding the reservation of the sacrament. There is, however, no further conversation in L/RC III to address the secondary end of reserved adoration in the sanctuary.

By way of assessment, L/RC III has made use of the church fathers at significant points in the dialogue. They were used as sources for understanding concerning the issue of eucharistic sacrifice and how the church can participate in this sacrifice. They were also used as sources for understanding how Christ is worthy of praise and adoration as long as he is present in the Eucharist. Finally, the early church practice of reserving the sacrament for the sake of communing the sick serves as a model for reminding contemporary Lutherans and Catholics of the primary reason for reservation. For each situation it is not the case that the fathers are teaching anything new to the Lutherans and Catholics in the dialogue. Rather, what we have in this case is that both Lutherans and Catholics are agreeing to use the fathers together in order to work toward and attain convergence in their ecumenical work regarding the Eucharist as sacrifice.

As mentioned above, a Roman Catholic member of L/RC III, Thomas Ambrogi, provides some insight into perspectives of Roman Catholic theology and ecclesiology during the time of the third round, in 1967, just following Vatican II. His comments touch on the fathers and the nature of the church. Amrogi states:

[there is a] greater prominence now being given to the ecclesial character of the eucharistic presence of Christ. We are returning to the scriptural, patristic and medieval emphasis upon the res sacramenti, the communion ecclesiastica, viz.,
the real presence of Christ in the eucharistic community and in the souls of each member of the church.\footnote{Thomas E. Ambrogi, S.J., “Contemporary Roman Catholic Theology of the Eucharistic Sacrifice,” in L/RC III, 155.}

Some of the ecumenical implications of such a return are evident in L/RC III. On the Eucharist as sacrifice, we have explored how Augustine was used to support an emergent common understanding of how it is the church “offers Christ” in the Eucharist \textit{precisely because} it is that same Christ who is offered to the church by the Father.\footnote{There are many areas where the early church offers little help. As Harry McSorley recounts in his “From Position Papers to Final Statement,” two are especially pertinent for L/RC III. “In the discussion, Father Burghardt noted that in the post-Nicene period it was frequently and emphatically affirmed that one who has died, who has fallen asleep in Christ, is helped by the eucharistic sacrifice. Nevertheless, he added, there is no clear patristic theology as to the precise way in which the Eucharist is advantageous to the departed faithful. “Another area where patristic theology is unclear, Father Burghardt observed, concerns the relationship between the sacrifice of Christ – which all the Fathers regarded as once-for-all, all-sufficient, unrepeatable – and the eucharistic sacrifice which all regarded as effective and of advantage because of its connection with Christ’s sacrifice. To be sure, they did not regard the Eucharist simply as a mental recollection of past saving events. For many of the Fathers \textit{anamnesis} or memorial involved a mysterious making-present of the once-for-all event of salvation. Cyprian, Chrysostom and several of the Eastern Fathers were among those who clearly saw the problem, but they did not offer satisfactory explanations. To the present day Catholic theologians have been grappling with the problem of the one sacrifice and the many Masses” (L/RC III, 19).}

On the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, we have explored how the early church’s understanding of \textit{koinonia} is crucial; namely, that the sacrament of the Eucharist which establishes and sustains the \textit{koinonia} should be extended throughout the \textit{koinonia} by bringing the sacrament to the sick. But we cannot make too much of this \textit{koinonia} here, since Ambrogi’s comments are ancillary to the Statement of L/RC III itself and communion ecclesiology does not come to prominence until later. What can be said is that a particular aspect of what has become communion ecclesiology is evident in L/RC III, specifically that the church’s \textit{koinonia} with God and by extension within itself finds its establishment precisely in the eucharistic sacrifice.
In L/RC IV, *Eucharist and Ministry*, there is an overt connection between the practices of the church and its structure. L/RC IV clearly states as much at the outset of its work, “Eucharist and Ministry: A Lutheran-Roman Catholic Statement.” While this is the fourth round of dialogue, it is still early in the time frame of the dialogue, the meetings being held from March 1968, to spring, 1970. Since the first round was in 1965, it is clear that these meetings had gone apace, and the outlook and attitude were hopeful and positive. This round attempted to sift through the material and “to clear away misunderstandings, to clarify to each other the theological concerns of our traditions, and to see what common affirmations” could be made.

This round is distinctive because the theological work seemed to rest with the Catholics. The central issue was the recognition by each church of the ordained ministry of the other; in particular how each church is apostolic or retains apostolicity. As we will see below, Lutherans have never denied the office of ordained ministry of the Roman Catholic Church, while the Catholic Church has indeed denied the validity of that same office in the Lutheran Church. So, as the Lutherans were presenting their positions in explanation of how they view the office of ministry as valid for both traditions, the Catholics were presenting their positions so as to open the possibility of recognizing the Lutheran office of Ministry as valid. This means that the theological onus was on the Catholics. Indeed, this proved to be the case, as the Catholic historical and theological

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527 Here L/RC IV briefly reviewed the positive agreements reached regarding the Nicene Creed, baptism, and the Eucharist, noting “[t]he problem of the Ministry is an inevitable item on any agenda of doctrinal discussion between Roman Catholics and Lutherans. In each of our other discussions, we have found ourselves confronted by it” (7).  
reflections will confirm.\textsuperscript{529} In particular, L/RC IV uses the fathers as models for conceiving apostolicity that broadens the range of meaning of apostolicity. This broadened range in turn helped Catholics advance toward acknowledgement of the Lutheran form of Ministry.

At the end of their respective reflections, each church makes recommendations to their fellow Lutherans and Catholics. Each essentially claims that the ministry of the other should be recognized as valid and that the Word is in fact rightly preached and Christ Jesus is in fact present at their Eucharists. In doing so, however, the Lutherans claim, “we have again seen clearly a fidelity to the proclamation of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments \textit{which confirms our historic conviction that the Roman Catholic church is an authentic church of our Lord Jesus Christ.}”\textsuperscript{530} Thus the Lutherans show that they have never denied the authenticity of the Roman Church. The Catholics, on the other hand, when making their recommendations, claim, “in our study we have found serious defects in the arguments \textit{customarily used against the validity of the eucharistic Ministry of the Lutheran churches. In fact, we see no persuasive reason to deny the possibility of the Roman Catholic church recognizing the validity of this Ministry.}”\textsuperscript{531} What L/RC IV offers here is presently a controversial point, with the official Roman Catholic position not accepting L/RC IV’s view. As we will see below, especially in our discussion of L/RC X, this assessment bears directly on the Catholic understanding of the Order of ordained office. Indeed, L/RC X is trying to address this issue of apostolicity ecumenically, given the official Roman Catholic position.

\textsuperscript{529} Chapter 1 of L/RC IV is the Common Statement made jointly by both groups, Chapter 2 is the Lutheran Reflections and Chapter 3 the Catholic Reflections on that Statement. 
\textsuperscript{530} L/RC IV, “A Lutheran-Roman Catholic Statement,” 22 (emphasis added). 
\textsuperscript{531} L/RC IV, “A Lutheran-Roman Catholic Statement,” 32 (emphasis added).
The theological bases for these recommendations of L/RC IV are a renewed sense of the church and a nuance of the term “ministry,” with both a lowercase “m” and an uppercase “M,” as briefly mentioned in an earlier chapter and will be commented on below. The renewed sense of the nature of the church is described in two ways. In the Statement itself, the church is spoken of in terms of the people of God. In a background essay, Killian McDonnell speaks of the church in terms of communion. Both of these hail from the language used in Vatican II’s *Lumen gentium.*

In his essay, Kilian McDonnell works through the emergent focus of Vatican II on *koinonia* in *Lumen gentium.* McDonnell stresses that the concept of *koinonia* opened ways for the Catholic Church to speak of some other Christian bodies as churches, as opposed to ecclesial communities – and that this was a monumental shift. Before this, the Catholic Church would recognize individual Christians, but not groups of them as churches, at least not in any more significant way than sociologically. It was the understanding of *koinonia* specifically based in a christological sense that allowed for a properly theological attribution of the term ‘church’ to some other Christian groups; thereby both the Roman Catholic Church and those other churches share a true sense of being ‘church’. However, from the Catholic perspective, this communion that is shared between the Catholic Church and other churches is incomplete. Particularly important for L/RC IV is the lack of the Order of Ministry among the churches and ecclesiastical

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533 Indeed, as L/RC IV states: “Most Lutherans regard the development of Roman Catholic ecclesiology in the Second Vatican Council as an achievement to be admired and perhaps even envied. They can appreciate the effective interpretation of the scriptures, the development of patristic insights, and the adoption of a new theological posture which turns away from the polemics of the post-Reformation period to a new openness to other churches and to the discussions of the ecumenical movement” (55).
communities of the West which are outside the Roman Catholic Church. Referring to the Decree on Ecumenism from Vatican II, McDonnell states, “as long as the ecclesial communities lack the sacrament of orders they lack the fullness of the eucharistic mystery, or, in other words, the validity of the sacrament depends on the validity of the ministerial office.”

McDonnell follows this comment up with a quick discussion of how this point can be nuanced so that there can be a nuanced sense of validity. And it is this nuance based on koinonia that is important for L/RC IV.

In each case, the theological point is to claim that the church as a whole has a purpose and function beyond any particular “denominational” expression of it. This purpose and function is, as mentioned above, what L/RC IV calls the “ministry” (with a lowercase “m”) of the church. There is, however, also a special “Ministry” (marked in L/RC IV with an uppercase “M”), which is designated for a particular form of service, “a specific order, function or gift (charism) within and for the sake of Christ’s church in its mission in the world.”

L/RC IV does not use the fathers or the early church when talking about the church as the people of God or as communion; but it is this vision of the church that opens up the way for the emphasis on the broad and common ministry of the church as primary and the specialized and specific Ministry of the church as essential and secondary. The fathers are used, however, when the dialogue takes up the form of this special Ministry, to explore various legitimate structures of Ministry and to argue for

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534 L/RC IV, 322.
535 L/RC IV, “A Lutheran-Roman Catholic Statement,” 9. The Statement also claims, “This Ministry has the twofold task of proclaiming the gospel to the world – evangelizing, witnessing, service – and of building up in Christ those who already believe – teaching exhorting, reproving, and sanctifying, by word and sacrament” (11).
Catholic acknowledgement of the Lutheran structure. Both in the joint Statement and in the Catholic reflections following the Statement, church fathers are referred to in order to explore the various structures of this specialized Ministry. The joint Statement relies on background essays by James McCue and Walter Burghardt to explain that for the fathers ‘apostolicity’ had various meanings: with regard to doctrine, practices, and authority and these senses served as models for how Lutherans and Catholics can understand a broadened sense of apostolicity functioning in the present context.\footnote{More recent scholarship has taken this examination of apostolicity even further. John J. Burkhard’s \textit{Apostolicity Then and Now: An Ecumenical Church in a Postmodern World} (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004) explores the various understandings of apostolicity in the early church and categorizes them under four headings: apostolicity of origin, apostolicity of doctrine, apostolicity or life, and apostolic succession (26-39). Given these categories, it seems that the Western church has emphasized apostolicity of doctrine and apostolic succession or some hybridization of the two at the expense of the others and possibly to the detriment of a full understanding of apostolicity of doctrine and apostolic succession themselves. Additionally, the international Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue has produced \textit{The Apostolicity of the Church} (Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2006). This dialogue does not explore apostolicity as broadly as Burkhard, but neither does it ignore the breadth of meaning for apostolicity which Burkhard discusses. This dialogue focuses on the relationship between “the apostolic gospel and the apostolicity of the church” and what role apostolic succession and the ordained ministry serve in that context.}

The Statement also notes that the stress of succession fell most heavily on succession of doctrine, with succession of apostolic office serving the succession of doctrine. We will see below that the Catholic reflections included Ignatius, the \textit{Didache}, and Jerome.

As mentioned above, the greater theological task for this round lay with the Catholics, that they might recognize the validity of the Lutheran order of Ministry even though it does not come from an episcopal source. L/RC IV does not give much attention to the question of how Lutherans might desire a change in their own church structure, one that would include apostolic succession through the episcopacy.\footnote{Maurice C. Duchaine’s essay “Stages in Questions and Development” in L/RC IV, 34-68 (esp. 53-61) chronicles the main discussion points that were made throughout L/RC IV’s multiple meetings. One of these points centered on the Lutherans’ consideration of a place for the episcopacy as a meaningful element in the church’s apostolicity.} Even so, given the
focus of the dialogue’s Statement, it makes sense that the majority of the work
concerning the historical and theological formation of the specialized Ministry would be
done by the Catholic members. Indeed, two Catholics that we have been introduced to in
the first chapter of the present work wrote background papers dealing with just this:
James F. McCue wrote “Apostles and Apostolic Succession in the Patristic Era” and
Walter J. Burghardt wrote “Apostolic Succession: Notes on the Early Patristic Era.” In
the former, McCue explores a wide range of material from the early church in order to
show how conceiving of apostolicity in terms of historical succession in office and as
“the decisive mark by which to identify the true church of Jesus Christ” can be
broadened. In the latter, Burghardt presents a much slimmer study, one which stresses
his own assessment that the first two centuries thought of apostolicity in terms of
“doctrinal succession of the apostles,” while in the succeeding centuries, “There is a
mutual interplay: doctrinal integrity and an identifiable chain (most often of those in an
official position). Put another way: doctrinal communion and legitimate appointment.”

The one Lutheran participant who wrote on the fathers was Arthur Carl Piepkorn, also
already introduced in the first chapter, in his essay “A Lutheran View of the Validity of
the Lutheran Orders.” In it he cites the fathers to argue two points: that the form and
practice of ordination among Lutherans is in accord with some ancient practices and that
there have been a multitude of activities and responsibilities that were deemed the

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539 Walter J. Burghardt, “Apostolic Succession,” L/RC IV, 177 (italics in original). Even for so brief an
account as Burghardt gives, my summary leaves out much. Burghardt’s paper explores a number of points
about apostolic succession: the principle of succession conceived broadly; the actual succession in
episcopal office more narrowly; doctrinal succession; the interplay between the jurisdictional, personal, and
the evolution of the apostolate into the episcopate; and the thorny question of apostolicity recognized
outside the church (e.g., in the Donatist controversy).
purview of the episcopacy which have at some time or another shifted to that of the presbyterate (e.g., preaching during Sunday Eucharist and the administration of Confirmation).

It is important to keep in mind the goal of this round of the dialogue. It is modest in one sense: that both churches recognize that the Ministry of each is currently valid. This is an example of ecumenical convergence and not consensus, because it does not address the question of whether or not the office of Ministry in either church was valid at any particular point in history or how the two sides might overcome remaining differences centered on the episcopal office.

In moving toward this goal, however, the church fathers are used as models for how to conceive of apostolicity that broaden the concept in the joint Statement and in the Catholic reflections in order to argue for the variety of ways the Ministry is apostolic. Concerning the apostolicity of this Ministry, L/RC IV states, “The term ‘apostolic’ has had a variety of references: it has been applied for instance to doctrine, practices, authority. Indeed, the variety of ways in which the gospel is expressed in the early church may be recognized as a feature of apostolicity.”540 The issue of apostolicity raises the question of what is apostolic. For Catholics the stress has been on the apostolicity of the office of Ministry, for Lutherans the stress has been on the apostolicity of doctrine. In fact, the work of McCue, as we will see below, is cited as support for both the Catholic and Lutheran stresses. The Statement claims:

Historical studies have shown that in the New Testament and patristic periods there was stress on doctrinal succession; there also arose an emphasis on

540 L/RC IV, Statement, 11 (emphasis in original).
succession in apostolic office as a very important way of ensuring doctrinal succession and thus providing a sign of unity and a defense against heresy.\textsuperscript{541} In this way, we might say that the apostolicity of office was viewed in the patristic era as being in service to the apostolicity of doctrine.

In the Roman Catholic reflections on the joint Statement, the Catholics use the church fathers to argue historically that while there was a long tradition into the sixteenth century of ordination to the presbyterate by a bishop in apostolic succession, “Yet, in spite of this long history there are lacunae, along with exceptions that offer some precedent for the practice adopted by the Lutherans.”\textsuperscript{542} They then use the church fathers to argue, “despite the lack of episcopal succession, the Lutheran church by its devotion to gospel, creed, and sacrament has preserved a form of doctrinal apostolicity.”\textsuperscript{543}

In the first case, on the historical lacunae, three patristic sources are assessed: Ignatius of Antioch, the Didache, and St. Jerome. The first two are juxtaposed to illustrate the variation of presidencies at the Eucharist. The third is used as patristic evidence so weighty as to sway the wording of the Council of Trent such that the “preeminence of the bishops over presbyters” was not by divine law.\textsuperscript{544} For Ignatius, whose travels and letter writing in Asia Minor may have been between 105 and 135, the bishop is the head of the church (the local gathering of believers) who presides at the Eucharist. We do not, however, have attestation to the precise means of a bishop’s ordination. McCue’s essay references two of Ignatius’ letters, to the Magnesians and the Trallians, to demonstrate the Ignatian understanding of apostolicity, though of course

\begin{footnotes}
\item[541] L/RC IV, Statement, 12. The footnote to this is to Burghardt’s “Apostolic Succession: Notes on the Early Patristic Era.”
\item[542] L/RC IV, 25.
\item[543] L/RC IV, 27.
\item[544] L/RC IV, 25.
\end{footnotes}
Ignatius was not interested in formulating a definition of the term. McCue’s citation of the first, as I have indicated in italics, is laid out here in the full context of the entire verse:

Since, then, in the persons already mentioned I have seen your whole community in faith and have loved it, I exhort you: be eager to do all things in godly concord, with the bishop set over you in the place of God, and the presbyters in the place of the council of the apostles, and the deacons, most sweet to me, entrusted with the service of Jesus Christ, who before the ages was with the Father and appeared at the end.\textsuperscript{545}

McCue’s citation of the Trallians verse (again in italics) is again set in the context of the entire verse:

Similarly let everyone respect the deacons as Jesus Christ, as also the bishop who is a type of the Father, and the presbyters as the council of God and as the band of the apostles. Nothing can be called a church without these.\textsuperscript{546}

These verses point to the prominence of the bishop, as “in the place of God” and as “a type of the Father,” though it is the presbyters, albeit in proper relationship to the bishop, who carry the role of the apostles. So, what comes to be thought of later as “apostolicity” is apparently contained in this two-fold manner, through the authority and position of the bishop and the collegiality and conciliarity of the presbyters. On the role of the bishop as the president at the Eucharist, we have Ignatius’ letter to the Smyrnaeans:

You must all follow the bishop as Jesus Christ (followed) the Father, and (follow) the presbytery as the apostles; respect the deacons as the commandment of God. Let no one do anything apart from the bishop that has to do with the church. Let

\textsuperscript{545} Magnesians 6.1, in Ignatius of Antioch, ed. William R. Schoedel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 112. We should notice that Ignatius only uses the term bishop in the singular, whereas I Clement refers to bishops in the plural, thus showing Ignatius’ particular view of the importance and position of the bishop. This point is noted in Jerome Quinn’s very thorough essay, “Ministry in the New Testament,” L/RC IV, 97, footnote 109.

\textsuperscript{546} Trallians 3.1 (Schoedel, 140).
that be regarded as a valid eucharist which is held under the bishop or to whomever he entrusts it.\textsuperscript{547}

While Ignatius serves as the earliest example of the prominence of the episcopate, the \textit{Didache} serves as an early example of the ways eucharistic presidency took place without the episcopate. Probably written slightly earlier than Ignatius’ letters (though appearing second in the Catholic reflections of L/RC IV), the \textit{Didache} most likely hails from the Syrian/Palestinian area and thus shows the geographical differences in church organization at the end of the first and beginning of the second centuries. The verse cited in L/RC IV’s Statement is 10.7, which reads, “But permit the prophets to give thanks however they wish.”\textsuperscript{548} The verses cited in McCue’s essay are 11.3-5, which read:

\begin{quotation}
Now concerning the apostles and prophets, deal with them as follows in accordance with the rule of the gospel. Let every apostle who comes to you be welcomed as if he were the Lord. But he is not to stay for more than one day, unless there is need, in which case he may stay another. But if he stays three days, he is a false prophet.\textsuperscript{549}
\end{quotation}

Again, we have no verification of the way in which these apostles and prophets come by their status. Nevertheless, we have an interesting picture of the life of these churches, where apparently there were a number of peripatetic presiders at the Eucharist. Moreover, these prophets are associated with, if not likened to apostles, thus giving their ministry legitimacy.

The third patristic source mentioned in the Catholic reflections is St. Jerome. While a regular pattern of episcopate and presbyterate was established by the early third century, St. Jerome (d. 419-420), wanting to distinguish clearly between presbyters and

\textsuperscript{547} \textit{Smyrneans} 8.1, (Schoedel, 238). This text, along with \textit{Trallians} 2.2 and \textit{Philadelphians} 5.1 are cited in a footnote by McCue in his essay as further evidence of these very issues.

\textsuperscript{548} \textit{The Apostolic Fathers in English}, trans. Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 169.

\textsuperscript{549} \textit{The Apostolic Fathers in English}, 169.
deacons, argued that the presbyters are virtually if not actually no different from bishops.

The Catholic reflection states:

Is the difference between a bishop and a priest of divine ordination? St. Jerome maintained that it was not; and the Council of Trent, wishing to respect Jerome’s opinion, did not undertake to define that the preeminence of the bishop over presbyter was by divine law. If the difference is not of divine ordination, the reservation to the bishop of the power of ordaining Ministers of the eucharist would be a church decision. In fact, in the history of the church there are instances of priests (i.e., presbyters) ordaining other priests, and there is evidence that the church accepted and recognized the Ministry of priests so ordained. 550

The only demarcation, for Jerome, is that the bishop ordains to the Ministry of the Eucharist, and that is not mandated by God but rather an issue of church order. As we shall see in the discussion just below: Jerome features as a significant figure in the history of the development of and reflection upon the office of bishop. It is noteworthy that the Catholic reflections make direct use of the Lutheran Arthur Carl Piepkorn’s background essay (again, discussed below) as the research upon which to stake the claim about how history demonstrates the practice of and acceptance of priests ordaining priests.

It is important to note the difference in stress between the Catholic, James McCue, and the Lutheran, Arthur Carl Piepkorn, on the importance of Jerome. In his essay, McCue does not give much weight to Jerome’s view: “This view, to my present knowledge not wide-spread during the patristic era, seems to have been eliminated almost entirely subsequent to Augustine.” 551 In contrast, Piepkorn cites three texts from Jerome which display what Piepkorn calls the “synonymity of presbyter and bishop in the first

550 L/RC IV, 25.
five centuries.” Piepkorn’s presentation seems to have helped the Catholics appreciate the Lutheran position more fully.

In his Letter 69 to Oceanus, Jerome comments on the synonymity of bishops and presbyters. Oceanus was a Roman nobleman who wanted Jerome’s help to revoke the ordination of a Spanish bishop, Carterius, who had remarried. Oceanus finds that Carterius’ remarriage is contrary to the Scriptural passages from Timothy and Titus which claim that bishops can only be husband to one wife. Jerome, however, takes the position that since Carterius’ first marriage preceded his baptism it does not count in the Timothy injunction, and he should be allowed to remarry. In making this argument, Jerome writes, “In both epistles commandment is given that only monogamists should be chosen for the clerical office whether as bishops or as presbyters. Indeed with the ancients these names were synonymous, one alluding to the office, the other to the age of the clergy.”

In a similar vein, in his Commentary on Titus 1.5, Jerome writes, “The presbyter accordingly is the same as a bishop, and before rivalries came about on our religion through diabolical impulse … the churches were governed by a common council of presbyters. Later on some individual believed that those whom he baptized were his, not Christ’s, and it was decreed in the whole world that one of the presbyters should be chosen and placed over the rest and have the care of a single church and the seeds of divisions be removed.”

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554 This is Piepkorn’s translation of the text from Migne, Patrologia latina 26.597-8.
The third and key text from Jerome, however, is his *Letter 146 to Evangelus*, a correspondence with a fellow presbyter. Concerning the history of the bishops at Alexandria, Jerome writes:

… the apostle clearly teaches that presbyters are the same as bishops … When subsequently one presbyter was chosen to preside over the rest, this was done to remedy schism and to prevent each individual from rending the church of Christ by drawing it to himself. For even at Alexandria from the time of Mark the Evangelist until the episcopates of Heraclas and Dionysius the presbyters always name as bishop one of their own number chosen by themselves and set in a more exalted position … For what function, excepting ordination, belongs to a bishop that does not belong to a presbyter?\(^{555}\)

Recent scholarship has called into serious question the accuracy of Jerome’s historical assessment.\(^{556}\) Notwithstanding this, the way Jerome’s view is used in later theology is what we are interested in here, given his status as one of the most influential of the church fathers. Piepkorn’s evidence must have made an impression, since the Catholic reflections on L/RC IV’s Statement make explicit reference to the aforementioned decision of Trent not to go against Jerome’s judgment.

These three sources of Ignatius, the *Didache*, and Jerome are models for how to conceive of apostolicity that broadens the concept for use in the historical argument of the Catholics in L/RC IV (partially cited above):

… we find from the historical evidence that by the sixteenth century there had been a long and almost exclusive practice whereby the only Minister of the eucharist was one ordained by a bishop who had been consecrated as heir to a chain of episcopal predecessors. Yet, in this long history there are lacunae, along with exceptions that offer some precedent for the practice adopted by Lutherans.\(^{557}\)

\(^{555}\) Jerome, NPNF 6, 2nd ser., 288-9.

\(^{556}\) See Francis Sullivan’s discussion of this point in his *From Apostles to Bishops: The Development of the Episcopacy in the Early Church* (Manwah, NJ: Newman Press, 2001), 183-5. Here Sullivan offers a more precise view based largely on Origen’s writing about the choice and ordination of Alexandrian bishops in his time which was nearly two centuries before Jerome.

\(^{557}\) L/RC IV, 25.
This historical judgment recognizes the times in ecclesial history when legitimate and valid Ministers of the Eucharist were presiding without having been a bishop or ordained by a bishop. Thus the Catholics of L/RC IV use the fathers in an historical argument so that they can then use the fathers in a theological argument.

This theological argument is centered on the clarifications made about apostolic succession itself. The conclusions drawn by the Catholics are concise and worth quoting at length:

In the first two centuries of Christianity apostolic succession in doctrine (fidelity to the gospel) was considered more important than simple succession in office or orders. The lists of bishops that appeared late in the second century were intended to demonstrate more a line of legitimatized teachers than a line of sacramental validity. Undoubtedly apostolic succession through episcopal consecration is a valuable sign and aspect of apostolicity, for in church history there is a mutual interplay between doctrinal integrity and the succession of those who are its official teachers. Yet, despite the lack of episcopal succession, the Lutheran church by its devotion to gospel, creed, and sacrament has preserved a form of doctrinal apostolicity.558

This reasoning leads the Catholics to claim that it is “dubious” that the Lutheran church is defective because it does not retain apostolicity, since this can only be said if apostolicity is so narrowly conceived as to necessitate “succession through episcopal consecration” only.559 As Walter Burghardt’s investigations into the early church reveal, there are numerous, admittedly intimately related ways of being apostolic.560 And the Catholics of L/RC IV have determined that the Lutheran Church has retained apostolicity through “its devotion to gospel, creed, and sacrament.” This devotion was accomplished among Lutherans through the office of the presbyter, as was shown to be possible by the models

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558 L/RC IV, Catholic Reflections, 26-7.
559 L/RC IV, Catholic Reflections, 26.
of the fathers as discussed above: Ignatius, the Didache, and Jerome. Therefore, as L/RC III came to the conclusion that the Eucharists of the two churches are valid, so L/RC IV comes to the conclusion that those who preside at the Eucharist of the two churches are indeed valid Ministers in service to the larger ministry of the whole church.

And this brings us back to the role of the element of communion ecclesiology cited above, the common ministry of the whole church in which Catholics and Lutherans participate. To cite from L/RC IV’s Statement: “The church has, then, the task of proclaiming the gospel to all … The ministry which devolves upon the whole church can rightly be described as a priestly service … We recognize therefore that the whole church has a priesthood in Christ, i.e., a ministry or service from God to men.”561 It is this broader and more comprehensive view of the church that opened the way for the fathers to be used in the arguments of the dialogue as models for conceiving of the various and multiple view of the office of Ministry. As L/RC IV focused on the ministry of the whole people of God being served by the Ministry of those who preside at the Eucharist, so L/RC V focused on the renewal of the office of the Minister of the universal church for the very sake of that church’s communion. This is the round of the dialogue we turn to next.

L/RC V — Papal Primacy and the Universal Church (1974)

If the theological work of L/RC IV was largely on the Catholic side, it appears, at least at first, to be the reverse in L/RC V. Papal Primacy and the Universal Church

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561 L/RC IV, 9. It is good to be reminded here again of Kilian McDonnell’s background essay discussed above.
addresses the bishop of Rome and his role as pastor of the entire church catholic. The Lutheran participants had to wrestle with the conditions under which they might recognize the authority of such a Minister of the universal church, while the Catholic participants had to consider possible and seemingly necessary alterations to the role of the papacy in our current age. The key theological deliberation for L/RC V is the catholicity of the papacy in the reality of the fractured church; how can the papacy stimulate ecumenical rapprochement? While any shift in the posture and function of the papacy would require a true effort from the Catholic side, being under the authority of the pope would seem to border on the incomprehensible from the Lutheran side.

L/RC V makes it clear that its focus is on how the papacy can serve ecumenically. In doing so, a number of factors come into play. First, while the topic of communion ecclesiology does not feature directly in the Common Statement, there are elements of this growing understanding of the church evident in two of the background essays. Second, the intent to address primacy as opposed to infallibility freed up the dialogue to deliberate on the pope’s role and position in the universal church. Third, there was an intensive Scriptural and historical study that resulted in two significant theological assessments that bear on the present study: any reconsideration of the papacy along these lines should begin with something like an examination of the “Petrine function” of the papacy, and the patristic period reveals the complex of reasons for the rise in prominence of the papacy which resulted in the leadership provided by Leo I or Gregory the Great. In

562 Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue V: Papal Primacy and the Universal Church, eds. Paul C. Empie and T. Austin Murphy (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1974). Since L/RC V was published in 1974, only nine years after the first round of the L/RC dialogue, it would be too early to talk about any kind of full expression of communion ecclesiology. Even so, this was precisely the time when such ecclesiological work was burgeoning, inspired in part by Vatican II. See the previous chapter of the present work on the multiple beginnings of communion ecclesiology.
this way, L/RC V uses the fathers as precedent and model for making sense of the
“Petrine function” of the papacy along the lines of the way L/RC VI used the fathers in
formulating the purpose and function of teaching authority within the church.

To be more specific, L/RC V uses the fathers in two ways. In background essays
to the Common Statement, Patrick J. Burns and Kilian McDonnell use the fathers as
models of the “Petrine function” of the papacy, models that informed the dialogue
round’s suggestions of “norms for renewal” of the papacy. This work was done in the
context of communion ecclesiology. The especially-called Patristics Task Force, specific
to L/RC V, used the development of the papacy and Roman primacy as precedent to
establish the historical manifestation of the “Petrine function” in the early church.

In this section, I will comment on the unfolding communion ecclesiology – and
the fathers’ roles here – and how it affects L/RC V, discuss how the patristic evidence
plays a role (as just described above), and lay out the general points of agreement
between the two sides. When talking about the patristic evidence, we should be careful
to note that this round of the dialogue distinguishes itself in that there is little
consideration of any patristic theology of the papal office. Instead there is more
consideration of the development of the papal office itself as an historical phenomenon.
While the attention here is on the history of the papacy, this evidence is used in the
constructive ecumenical argument of L/RC V. This is a distinction from what I presented
in a previous chapter. There the church fathers were used to construct histories that were
background to the ecumenical arguments. Here, in L/RC V, the historical development
of the papal office from the patristic era is used in the ecumenical argument to inspire an
understanding of the “Petrine function” of the papacy.
Two background essays by Catholic participants, Patrick J. Burns and Kilian McDonnell, explore elements of the emerging ecclesiology of communion, the understanding of the church in the background of L/RC V. Burns posits that the early church is best understood as a *communio*, and that the role and function of the episcopate can only rightly be grasped with such a view of the church. Given the communion of the many local churches, “[a]s leaders of the local churches and agents of *communio* between these churches, the bishops became conscious of constituting a communion of their own.”  

Burns’ basic point is that while there arose a collegiality of bishops early in the life of the church, and while there was a sense of Roman primacy in the fourth and fifth centuries, these two realities are set in the context of the church as *communio*. Burns’ description is one of the early church’s situation as a forerunner of our own contemporary situation: the church as *communio* helped give shape to the papacy; the papacy found its function in the setting of the church as *communio*.

Killian McDonnell uses a contrast between a “universalist ecclesiology” and a “eucharistic *communio* ecclesiology” to discuss the development, centralization, and changing styles of papal primacy.  

As McDonnell writes, the first ecclesiology “takes its point of departure from the unity of the whole church and its extension into the whole world,” while the second “proceeds from the experience in the local church of the fullness of the gospel in the communion of faith and the sacramental life and goes on to relate each church as a faith and eucharistic communion to other churches experiencing

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the same fullness of the gospel.” Both views of the church have had their early proponents: Cyprian for the universalist and Ignatius for the communio. And while the first became dominant in the West, the second was not forgotten, indeed, it was itself dominant in the East. Moreover, both views are present in the documents of Vatican II, but, as McDonnell notes, the communio view, “with its special concern for the full actualization of the gospel in the local church, was given a new emphasis.” In the end, McDonnell concludes, “[w]hatever ecclesiology becomes dominantly operative in the church, whatever the style of exercising the Petrine ministry, the ideal relationship between pope and bishops is that of collegiality based on communio.”

There are further results from the connections between communion ecclesiology and the patristic era. L/RC V’s Common Statement makes use of these connections in the section entitled “Toward the Renewal of Papal Structures” in which it lists three “norms for renewal.” These are the principles of legitimate diversity, collegiality, and subsidiarity. The connections between communion ecclesiology and the patristic era are apparent in the first two. The first, the “principle of legitimate diversity”, claims that the guidance of the Spirit will, over time, lead to various forms of “piety, liturgy, 

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566 McDonnell, “Papal Primacy,” L/RC V, 188.
568 L/RC V, 19-20.
569 The third norm for renewal is the “principle of subsidiarity” which claims that what can be accomplished by the leadership of the most local level should be so accomplished. In this way, the Common Statement declares, “as the community is built up and its unity strengthened, the rights of minorities and minority viewpoints are protected within the unity of the faith” (L/RC V, 20). Again, Burns’ essay seems the main inspiration for this view where he states that the corresponding principle to subsidiarity is the principle of universal communion. The local and regional church is fully church but does not represent the entire church; this is only done in and through the communio of the whole Christian community as it is centered in Rome.
theology, custom, [and] law.”570 In turn, the papacy should be able to evolve with these
changes through time. This principle seems to be informed by the discussion in Patrick
Burns’s background essay of just such legitimate diversity existing in the *communio* of
the early church.571 For instance, in commenting on Leo I, Burns writes:

Leo’s consciousness of being not only the Western patriarch but, as bishop of
Rome in succession to Peter, the occupant of a central office within the world-
wide *corpus Christianorum* was much less an assertion of juridical authority than
a confession of ultimate responsibility for peace, unity, and purity of faith in the
ecumenical Christian *communio*. And that *communio* existed concretely only in
the unity-in-diversity of local and regional eucharistic communities which,
through their bishops, were in communion with one another and with the
*communio*’s central church in Rome and its bishop.572

The second norm for renewal is the “principle of collegiality.” This principle
attempts to safeguard the diversities of the church against the very real potential stifling
that can come through “excessive centralization of authority.”573 It calls upon leadership
at every level of the church to share in the responsibilities of the church’s life. This
principle likewise seems to be informed by Burns’ essay and the essay by Kilian
McDonnell. Burns comments that the Roman Catholic Church must locate the ministry
of the church “more clearly in the underlying *communio* of local and regional churches so
prominent in ancient Christian tradition” without losing sight of the need for a centralized
Christian ministry or without attempting a cultural and historical reversion.574

McDonnell describes the collegial relationship between the pope and bishops, and among
the bishops in the college of bishops, as one intimating presidency and mutuality – an

570 L/RC V, 19-20.
573 L/RC V, 20.
expression of communio. He also cites Leo as an example of an ancient pope who referred to the primacy of the metropolitan bishops in a similar fashion.\textsuperscript{575}

L/RC V was intentional from the very outset to address these thorny and complex issues of the papacy with as much depth and careful study as possible. Therefore, it commissioned two task forces to work on particular aspects of Petrine Ministry. The first was the New Testament Task Force, which produced an ancillary study, \textit{Peter in the New Testament}, that informed and aided the work of L/RC V.\textsuperscript{576} This study helped to focus the problem of disagreement between the two churches over “the role of particular persons, offices, or officeholders in exercising responsibility for the unity of the universal church.”\textsuperscript{577} Likewise, it helped to avoid anachronistic views of the relationship between Peter and Jesus and of the role of Peter as a leader in the church.\textsuperscript{578}

The second was the Patristics Task Force, which met and discussed the work before them, in the end determining that it was simply too vast and complex to produce anything like \textit{Peter in the New Testament}. So, the work of this task force, which is a two-part essay written by James F. McCue (Catholic) and Arthur Carl Piepkorn (Lutheran), was incorporated into the volume produced for L/RC V.\textsuperscript{579}

It is noteworthy that the Patristics Task Force’s explanation of the development of the papacy and Roman primacy is used as precedent for formulating L/RC V’s understanding of the “Petrine function” of the papacy. Examinations of the Bible and

\begin{footnotes}
\item[577] L/RC V, Statement, 11.
\item[578] L/RC V, Statement, 13-16.
\end{footnotes}
church history allow for “a fresh approach to the structure and operations of the papacy. There is increasing agreement that the centralization of the Petrine function in a single person or office results from a long process of development.” The Common Statement goes on to state confidently, both Lutherans and Catholics “can acknowledge that as the forms of the papacy have been adapted to changing historical settings in the past, it is possible that they will be modified to meet the needs of the church in the future more effectively.”

McCue’s portion of the essay, “The Beginnings Through Nicaea”, admits that writing a history of the primacy of Rome is difficult due to the temptation of anachronism. Yet, in order to attempt this kind of work, “[o]ne has to focus on those strands of early church life that are later worked together into the office exercised or claimed by the bishops of Rome.” Thus, there are five areas which describe these “strands” and which make up the various sections of McCue’s essay: (1) the problem of unity and universality; (2) the rise of monoepiscopacy as the norm by the end of the second century; (3) the relationship between monoepiscopacy and apostolicity; (4) the role of Petrine tradition in the life of the early church; and (5) the role of Rome in relationship to other churches and within the whole church.

Instead of addressing each of these in turn, I will simply call attention to the conclusions McCue reaches and note where they fit into the Common Statement. The conclusions are (1) Rome was alone in the West in claiming apostolicity in the early church, harkening back to the apostles Peter and Paul; (2) Rome was a seminal leader in

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580 L/RC V, 19.
581 L/RC V, 19.
582 McCue, “Roman Primacy,” L/RC V, 44.
the development of Christianity; (3) Rome claimed to be the See of Peter and even those in resistance acknowledged such; (4) “on at least two occasions (under Victor and under Stephen) Rome apparently broke off communion with churches following a practice different from its own,” and while Rome’s view did eventually prevail, its action was not necessarily from a “theory of primacy” nor did the Roman prevalence mean that Rome had authority over other bishops; and (5) the Council of Nicaea “presupposes a regional leadership of Rome but indicates nothing more.”

Piepkorn’s portion of the essay, “From Nicaea to Leo the Great,” is an account of the bishops of Rome from Sylvester to Leo. Piepkorn cites many of the external factors which allowed for Rome to take its place of importance in the early church, from the official establishment of Christianity under Constantine to the invading barbarians. The first cemented the church as a fixture in the empire’s life, and the second allowed for the ecclesial authority of Rome to flourish even as the imperial authority waned and shifted to other locations.

Even more important, from Piepkorn’s view, is the fact that with the exception of Leo, none of the bishops of Rome from Sylvester on were “eminent theologians.” Indeed, the reasons they “have been elevated to the honors of the altar of the West” are the circumstances surrounding their papacies. In general, each of the popes was able to surround himself with and elicit the aid of those who became the great theologians of the age (Athenasius, the Cappadocians, Chrysostom, Augustine, and Jerome) who were themselves not bishops of sees that would contend with Rome for power. Along with this

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583 McCue, “Roman Primacy,” L/RC V, 72.
584 Piepkorn, “Roman Primacy,” L/RC V, 75.
view, Piepkorn distinguishes between the kind of work the bishops of Rome had to do in pre- and post-Nicene times. In the earlier, their tasks were primarily pastoral, while in the later they were primarily political and administrative.

In the end, Piepkorn emphasizes the different views Rome had of itself with the views other regions of the church had of Rome. For Rome, there was a sense of primacy based on the incorporation of all the biblical images of Peter coupled with the historical circumstances that had allowed for a position of power. This was largely accepted in the West, with the periodic exception of North Africa, and tolerated in the East to varying degrees. Piepkorn notes a distinction whereby “[t]he bishops of Rome frequently think, write, and act in a ‘patriarchal’ (or regional) fashion rather than in a ‘papal’ fashion.”

And even when the bishops of Rome do exert their authority, it is only in the West and often with the help of civil authorities.

With this two-part history of the patristic period we have an explanation of the two coalescing factors of papal primacy, the figure of Peter and the importance of Rome. Throughout the first five centuries there were myriad ways of expression for what would become papal primacy. With this history, which culminates with Leo I, the Common Statement of L/RC V claims that by the end of the patristic period, “The Petrine function of the bishop of Rome is nothing less than the care for all the churches. It imposes upon other bishops the duty to obey his authority and apply his decisions. Thus Western theological affirmations of papal primacy found an early expression in the teaching of Leo I.”

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586 L/RC V, 17.
The Lutherans in their Reflections corroborate this position by affirming the new perspective achieved by the Scriptural and historical studies in discussing issues surrounding the papacy. This perspective allows the Lutherans to say, “While we are aware of the variety of factors which contributed to this development [of the papal primacy at Rome], we as Lutherans are impressed by the fact that the bishops of Rome were nevertheless able to exercise a Ministry of unifying and ordering the church in the West.”

Beyond this, L/RC V asks the Lutheran churches:

if they are able to acknowledge not only the legitimacy of the papal Ministry in the service of the Roman Catholic communion but even the possibility and the desirability of the papal Ministry, renewed under the gospel and committed to Christian freedom, in a larger communion which would include the Lutheran churches.

It is important to notice the use of communio terminology here. Not only is it used to describe the Roman Catholic Church, but it is also used to describe a larger relationship involving Lutherans and Catholics.

The Catholics in their Reflections point directly to the people-of-God ecclesiology of Vatican II as the context in which to place the papacy, while at the same time using the language of communion ecclesiology to describe what relationship may be hoped for with Lutherans. Thus, the Catholics can say, “In such a wider communion of churches the papacy would be able to serve as a sign and instrument of unity, not simply for

587 L/RC V, 30.
588 L/RC V, 22-3.
589 L/RC V, 36-8. “By setting the primacy of the pope within the broader context of the people-of-God ecclesiology, and by promoting a collegial understanding of authority in the church, Vatican Council II has called for modifications in the Roman Catholic understanding of papal leadership” (36).
Roman Catholics, but for other [sic] who have never ceased to pray and labor for the manifest unity of the whole church of Christ.”

As mentioned above, the central conceptual apparatus for this round was to view the Minister of the universal church in terms of its “Petrine function.” L/RC V defines the “Petrine function” as, “*a particular form of Ministry exercised by a person, officeholder, or local church with reference to the church as a whole.*” The Statement goes on to cite the ecumenical importance of this function, “This Petrine function of the Ministry serves to promote or preserve the oneness of the church by symbolizing unity, and by facilitating communication, mutual assistance or correction, and collaboration in the church’s mission.”

This focus on the papacy’s “Petrine function” and its place within the universal church led to a discussion in the Statement which resulted in the following agreements (worth quoting at length):

- Christ wills for his church a unity which is not only spiritual but must be manifest in the world.
- promotion of this unity is incumbent on all believers, especially those who are engaged in the Ministry of word and sacrament;
- the greater the responsibility of a ministerial office, the greater the responsibility to seek the unity of all Christians;
- a special responsibility for this may be entrusted to an individual Minister, under the gospel.
- such a responsibility for the universal church cannot be ruled out on the basis of biblical evidence;
- the bishop of Rome, whom Roman Catholics regard as entrusted by the will of Christ with this responsibility, and who has exercised his Ministry in forms that have changed significantly over the centuries, can in the future function in ways which are better adapted to meet both the universal

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590 L/RC V, 38.
591 L/RC V, 11.
592 L/RC V, 11-12.
and regional needs of the church in the complex environment of modern times.\textsuperscript{593}

These agreements are not meant to overshadow the remaining disagreements; namely that Roman Catholics regard papal primacy as according to divine will and that Lutherans promote Christian freedom when considering how papal primacy might serve the gospel, considering the issue of divine institution a secondary matter. In the end, L/RC V positively claims, “We believe that our joint statement reflects a convergence in the theological understanding of the papacy which makes possible a fruitful approach to these questions.”\textsuperscript{594}

By way of summary, we have examined in this section how elements of communion ecclesiology were present in L/RC V and how it was linked with the patristic era. In particular there was a representative of communion ecclesiology in Ignatius of Antioch, as distinguished from a representative of universalist ecclesiology in Cyprian of Carthage. Further we noted how Leo the Great was raised as an example of an early pope who worked in a collegial fashion with his fellow bishops: this helped to inform the “norms for renewal” for the papacy. We also noted how the patristic evidence, i.e., the history of the formation of the papacy in the early church, played a formative role as precedent in helping L/RC V to formulate an understanding of the Petrine function and as models for how to put this Petrine function to use. Lastly, this section also laid out the agreements and suggestions made by and for both Lutherans and Catholics based on their understanding of the “Petrine function” of the papacy.

\textsuperscript{593} L/RC V, 22.  
\textsuperscript{594} L/RC V, 23.
L/RC X – *The Church as Koinonia of Salvation* (2005)

If the third, fourth, and fifth rounds of the U.S. Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue have made use of only emerging aspects of communion ecclesiology, L/RC X is the one round that uses communion ecclesiology in a full and robust manner. Demonstrating the flexibility of communion ecclesiology, L/RC X proceeds with its study by couching *koinonia* language in terms of salvation, thereby opening a way to overcoming some of the characteristic divergent stresses of Lutheran and Catholic views of communion ecclesiology. The Agreed Statement begins with this central “lens” formulated in a set of three propositions, “the church shares in salvation; the church shares salvation with others; and the church is a community shaped by salvation.”

Lutherans have stressed three elements when considering communion ecclesiology: the communion must be primarily one of faith; preaching and the sacraments are necessary for ecclesial communion; and freedom should remain where issues of church structure and traditions are concerned. Catholics have stressed the interrelationship of the individual believer’s participation in grace and her participation in the church, “realized through the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the

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595 A note on terminology: as we saw with the discussion on communion ecclesiology in previous chapters, the New Testament Greek term ἱνωνία (koinonia) connotes unity, relationship, and sharing in faith. Usually it is translated into English as “communion” or sometimes “fellowship.” The Latin word which corresponds to *koinonia* is communio, which can have the same translation in English. For the purposes of most ecclesiologies of communion, the Greek and Latin are interchangeable, and that practice will be used here. The Agreed Statement does admit that there is no common definition of *koinonia* ecclesiology, but stresses “[k]oinonia encompasses all Christians and the salvation of all who share the gospel” (*Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue X: The Church as Koinonia of Salvation*, eds. Randall Lee and Jeffrey Gros [Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005], 16).
sacraments, especially the Eucharist.” These acts of ministry are accomplished by the bishop (with priests often acting in his stead), who represents one of two “personal office[s] of leadership” that are necessary for the church’s communion, the other being the papacy.

In focusing on the church’s participation in salvation, L/RC X broadens the scope of communion ecclesiology, especially in terms of the structures of Ministry. This round addresses the form of Ministry not yet discussed; namely, the episcopacy (recall that L/RC IV and L/RC V addressed forms of Ministry at the congregational/parish and universal levels, respectively, without considering the interrelationships between these and any mediating levels, i.e., regional and national). As L/RC X states, “All structures and ministries, as instruments of koinonia, serve God’s people. Whatever is said, then, of ‘koinonia ecclesiology’ and ‘ministry in service of community’ is to be embedded in this context: the people of God, all Christian believers.”

With salvation as the telos of ministry, L/RC X argues for a fresh view of the possible structures of Ministry, in particular as they emerged from the early church. Indeed, L/RC X uses the church fathers to argue for a legitimate asymmetry between the Lutheran emphasis of the basic form of Ministry as presbyteral and the Catholic emphasis of the basic form of Ministry as episcopal. In formulating this constructive ecumenical argument, L/RC X uses the historical development of the offices of Ministry in the early church and the fathers’ theological assessments of these offices as precedent to

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598 Communion/Koinonia, 129.
599 L/RC X, 16.
emphasize comparable functions of Ministry that might help overcome the disparity between Lutheran and Catholic views of the order of Ministry.

To help assess this work of L/RC X, we will employ the work of J. Robert Wright and John Erickson.\(^6^0^0\) (I should remind the reader that I have made use of Erickson in chapter five of the present work, on communion ecclesiology.) I will be using Wright and Erickson’s work to help comment upon and assess the work of L/RC X as we progress through the dialogue round. Their work is quite germane to L/RC X since this round focuses on the office of bishop in an intense way not seen before in the U.S. Lutheran-Catholic dialogue.

These are two authors who have constructed ecumenical schemata that show how different church fathers correspond with different ecumenical traditions. They each note distinctions between three of the church fathers which are important for ecumenical discussions: Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus of Lyons, and Cyprian of Carthage. Wright describes these three fathers’ views of the task and role of the bishop: Ignatius gives witness to the bishop as the one who presides over the eucharistic unity of the whole church; Irenaeus to the bishop as the chief teacher who ensures doctrinal unity by being the link in time between each local church and the teaching of the apostles; and Cyprian to the bishop as the administrative leader who becomes the bond across space for the

unity of each local church with all the others. Erickson takes this basic characterization one step further by associating these fathers with the three basic divisions of Christianity: the Ignatian view of the bishop as the one who primarily presides at Eucharist with the Orthodox; the Irenaean view of the bishop as the one who teaches the apostolic faith with authority with Protestantism; and the Cyprianic view of the bishop as a member of a collegial body who retains the unity of the church with Roman Catholicism. As we will see in the following discussion, I will make use of this helpful typology but make modifications that are more specific to the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue, especially on the Lutheran side.

Essentially, L/RC X uses koinonia as the lens through which the church’s structures and ministries can be viewed. More accurately, the claim of L/RC X is that it is the nature and purpose of the church as koinonia and mission which set the proper context for discussing its structures and ministries. The Agreed Statement begins with this central “lens” formulated in a set of three propositions (already stated above), “the church shares in salvation; the church shares salvation with others; and the church is a community shaped by salvation.” Thus the koinonia of salvation is composed of this entire complex of issues; and since the church is the visible and public expression of this koinonia to the world, it is important to note how the structures and ministries of the church are viewed through the koinonia lens.

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601 Wright characterizes each of these as Priest, Prophet, and King, respectively. “Origins,” 31.
602 Erickson characterizes each of these as alter Christus, alter apostolus, and alter Petrus, respectively, “Episkopé,” 97.
603 L/RC X, 12-36.
L/RC X begins its analysis of the similarities and differences between Lutherans and Catholics on various expressions of the church in relation to this *koinonia* ecclesiology, ranging from the congregation/parish to the synod/diocese to the national expression to the worldwide expression. Heading this discussion, though, is a clarification of the characteristic perspective each church has regarding the “local church.” L/RC X states, “on the one hand, both Lutherans and Catholics agree that there is a local body which is not merely a part of the church, but is wholly church, even if not the whole church and not in isolation from the rest of the church.” Yet there is a key difference between the two churches over what is classified as the local church: for Lutherans, the local church is the congregation, while for Catholics, the local church is the diocese. Given the work of Wright and Erickson there is the correspondence with patristic views here, although with modifications. The Lutheran understanding of the local church as congregation aligns with an Ignatian view of the office of Ministry – the local church is served and overseen by the ordained person who is responsible in himself for the eucharistic life of the congregation. The Catholic understanding aligns with a Cyprianic view – the local church is served and overseen by the ordained person who is

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605 L/RC X, 17.
606 L/RC X, 17. Here I cite a very helpful endnote from L/RC X, which reads: “Within Roman Catholicism, the terms ‘particular church’ and ‘local church’ are often used interchangeably. Most often the Second Vatican Council documents use the term ‘particular church’ to refer to the diocese, but this term can also refer to churches in the same rite region, or culture. There is no standard practice governing the use of this terminology. In spite of the Second Vatican Council’s use of the term ‘particular church,’ this term has not enjoyed widespread acceptance. Whether or not it refers to a diocese or a larger region has to be discerned from its context. The present document explores the asymmetry between Lutheran and Roman Catholic understandings of what constitutes the basic unity of ecclesiality implied by the term ‘local’ or ‘particular’ church” (L/RC X, “Agreed Statement” endnote 34, 107).
responsible for the bond of unity both among those who serve under him and between those others who hold the same position in other places.\textsuperscript{607}

This difference is important because it betrays from each point of view a whole set of convictions which in fact “masks a deep structural similarity.”\textsuperscript{608}  This similarity is simple in one respect: both churches experience the basic unit of the ecclesial life as the “face-to-face assembly” of the congregation or parish; but neither church experiences this reality in isolation. In each case, there is a “primary regional community” called the synod or diocese that serves to assemble these individual assemblies in \textit{koinonia}.  L/RC X states, “Lutherans and Catholics differ as to whether the face-to-face assembly or the primary regional community is the local church in the theological sense, but the institutional life of both traditions is shaped by this pairing.”\textsuperscript{609}  The Agreed Statement claims it would be a mistake theologically to argue exclusively for one of these to be the true understanding of the local church. Instead it proposes that Lutherans and Catholics ought to strive to ascertain how the pairing of these two expressions is normative for the church, and to do this, the ministers who oversee these local churches, the pastor and the bishop, need examination.

The key issue raised here in this pairing of the face-to-face assembly with the regional community is that \textit{both} Lutherans and Catholics structure their churches this

\textsuperscript{607} It is quite possible to argue that both the Lutherans and Catholics have an Irenaean element to them as well – certainly both churches are concerned to embody and pass along the true teaching of the church. Yet there are characteristic distinctions here too. The Lutherans see this as happening primarily through the proper preaching of the Word and study of doctrine, both primarily accomplished and overseen by the parish pastor. The Catholics see this as happening primarily through the office of the bishop and the college of bishops, overseen by the pope as \textit{pirmus inter pares}.

\textsuperscript{608} L/RC X, 19.

\textsuperscript{609} L/RC X, 20.
way, yet each emphasizes one aspect over and against the other. Thus, there is an

*asymmetry* in the structures of the ministries. As the Agreed Statement says:

Asymmetry between the two traditions occurs because Catholics locate the basic unit of the church in the particular church or diocese, while for Lutherans the basic unit of the church is the congregation. This asymmetry is paralleled by where they locate the fullness of ministerial office. Catholics locate the fullness of ministry in the bishop, while Lutherans find the office of word and sacrament fully realized in the pastor.  

The Agreed Statement goes on to note that due to this asymmetry, there has been a tendency toward and history of false theological choices forced between the two churches over these two emphases. Because of this, “both Lutherans and Catholics suffer from an imbalance in their theological account of the church.”

As mentioned above, L/RC X takes the history of the early church very seriously as a theological source for their contemporary discussions. Indeed, L/RC X uses the historical development of the office of Ministry in the early church and the fathers’ theological assessments as precedents in order to formulate the constructive ecumenical argument that there is an asymmetry between Lutherans and Catholics regarding which expression of church is the “local church” (face-to-face assembly or regional community) and consequently which office of Ministry (presbyter or bishop) oversees and serves that local church. Further the L/RC uses this patristic evidence, and its reception into the medieval period, to argue that this asymmetry may be legitimate and not church-dividing.

The pairing of the face-to-face with the regional community is found very early in the life of the church, with the offices of Ministry shifting their responsibilities for

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610 L/RC X, 29.
611 L/RC X, 40.
various aspects of the church’s life throughout this time.\textsuperscript{612} L/RC X refers to Ignatius of Antioch as the earliest church father that we know of to formulate the terminology of bishop, presbytery, and deacons to describe the common ecclesial situation of each church having “a single principal leader, who was often assisted by counselors and one or more deputies.”\textsuperscript{613} The Agreed Statement cites letters from Ignatius that we have seen before in previous chapters of the present work, in this case *Magnesians* 2, 6, and 13.1; *Trallians* 2.3; *Philadelphians* praef. and 7.1; and *Polycarp* 6.1 as places where the Antiochene bishop describes the three offices in relationship to one another. L/RC X states, “Together these leaders were responsible for the activity and especially the cohesion of the church they served. Cohesion between churches was part of their task, and it was carried out by letter, personal travel, and meetings (synods), even in the second and third centuries.”\textsuperscript{614}

I will comment on two references made in L/RC X concerning ecclesial cohesion. Ignatius’ *Magnesians* 2 is cited to describe the cohesion of a church which the three types of leaders serve (bishop, presbyters, and deacons), “Since, then, I was thought worthy to see you in the person of Damas, your godworthy bishop, and the worthy presbyters Bassus and Apollonius, and my fellow slave the deacon Zotion, from whom may I benefit, because he is subject to the bishop as to the grace of God and to the presbytery as to the law of Jesus Christ – .”\textsuperscript{615} In this passage Ignatius is himself greeting the three

\begin{footnotes}
\item[612] The discussion in the section “Historical Development after the New Testament” from “Part Two: Further Biblical and Historical Support for Deepening Communion in Structures and Ministries” of the Agreed Statement is very clear about this twin development and its implications for subsequent eras of the church (66-73).
\item[613] L/RC X, 67.
\item[614] L/RC X, 67.
\item[615] *Ignatius*, (Schoedel, 107).
\end{footnotes}
strata of leadership in the church in Magnesia, demonstrating the close levels of cooperation between them. The language that associates the bishop with the grace of God and the presbyters with the law of Christ (as well as the deacons being subject to both) gives some sense of the order and rank of the offices. Moreover, the fact that Ignatius mentions meeting with representatives of all three offices exhibits both the cohesion within a local church as well as the responsibility of a bishop – as the one who presides at a local Eucharist – for upholding the relationship between churches.

*I Clement* is cited in order to demonstrate how the cohesion between churches was supported by personal letters and personal visits. This letter reveals a number of elements about leadership in the early church. It is written as an address from one congregation (the Roman) to another (the Corinthian) to confront the divisions internal to the latter, divisions which arose when some younger presbyters overtook the positions of older presbyters in Corinth. The admonition and remedy offered in the letter are based heavily on Scripture and the established roles of bishops and presbyters. However, it is not clear from the letter what sort of hierarchy there may have been among these. Further, the letter does not base its authority in these matters on any status either from the fact that it is the Roman church or from any weight attached to the role of the bishop of Rome. The emphasis in the letter is on how the congregation is responsible for the appointment of its leaders and how it should act in love in its striving for unity.

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\[616\] While the letter is known as *I Clement*, the letter itself is addressed from the Roman church to the Corinthian church. No mention of Clement is made in the letter. The tradition of attributing this letter to Clement springs up early in the church, but it is from sources external to the text. Indeed, Francis Sullivan reflects the current scholarly consensus that there was not a single bishop leading the church at Rome in the late first century, but a college of presbyters: see his *Apostles to Bishops*, 101.
L/RC X claims, “Until the third century, there seems not to have been a clear distinction between the titles ‘bishop’ and ‘presbyter’: the former could be viewed as a presbyter with the main responsibility for a church and the authority and powers necessary for carrying out that responsibility.”\(^{617}\) To support this claim, the Agreed Statement cites Ignatius of Antioch’s letter to Polycarp of Smyrna and Polycarp’s own letter to the Philippians. In the first, Ignatius addresses Polycarp as “bishop of the church of the Smyrnaeans, or rather, one who has God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ as bishop.”\(^{618}\) But in the second, Polycarp does not refer to himself explicitly as bishop, but only begins his letter with, “Polycarp and the presbyters with him to the church of God sojourning at Philippi.”\(^{619}\) Thus, from the evidence we have, it seems that the bishop was the one who would preside over the face-to-face assembly \textit{and} be the one to participate representatively in the regional community of churches in a more extended location. So, the bishop was the one who served as the Minister of \textit{koinonia} in both senses, while presbyters \textit{as a group} seemed to have been largely responsible for decision-making and doctrine without any priestly duties.\(^{620}\)

Using Wright and Erickson, we can comprehend how what would become separate emphases of the Lutherans and Catholics regarding the role of bishop were combined in the one office in the first two centuries of the church. The bishop was both

\(^{617}\) L/RC X, 68.  
\(^{618}\) \textit{Polycarp, Inscription}, (Schoedel, 257).  
\(^{620}\) This is not say that a single presbyter may not have been the central leader in a specific congregation and thereby had priestly duties (indeed this seems to be the plausible case for Polycarp), but rather that the college of presbyters at a church functioned as a group without priestly duties. Additionally, L/RC X comments on the special situtation of metropolitan bishops, those that served as the head of large cities across the empire, such as Rome, especially during the second century. The structure of leadership in those places is not well known, given what historical evidence we have, and surely it is speculation to suggest that there was anything like a uniform structure of leadership across all such cities.
the one who presides at the face-to-face eucharistic assembly, the role associated with Ignatius of Antioch, and the one who is responsible for the inter-congregational expressions of unity, the role associated with Cyprian of Carthage.

After the time of Constantine, however, the church grew rapidly in numbers, and there were corresponding changes in the offices of Ministry. As the number of congregations grew, the role of the bishop as the representative participant of the regional churches took priority over his role as presider of the face-to-face assembly; that role was given to the presbyters over time. The L/RC quotes Jerome as a patristic authority who argues that there is very little to distinguish a bishop from a presbyter. In his *Letter 146 to Evangelus*, he writes:

> For also at Alexandria, from Mark the evangelist down to bishops Heraclas and Dionysius, the presbyters always chose one of themselves and, having elevated him in grade, named him bishop—just as if any army might make an emperor by acclamation, or deacons choose one of themselves, whom they know to be hard-working, and call him archdeacon. For what, apart from ordaining, does a bishop do which a presbyter does not?\(^{621}\)

This is a letter we’ve seen referenced before, in the discussion of L/RC IV above. As we saw then, Jerome’s view is that a bishop is only higher than any presbyter in honor and not in status. That is, bishops are essentially equivalent to presbyters except for the privilege of ordaining someone to the office of presbyter.

So, it was the Lutherans who became the advocates for Jerome’s view, as L/RC X shows, a view reflected in the work of Isidore of Seville (c. 560-636). The Spaniard’s *De Ecclesiasticis Officiis* is mainly a piece on the liturgy in two parts, the second of which deals with the hierarchy of the church and the need for order in the church. Isidore seems

\(^{621}\) Quoted from L/RC X, 71. This appears to be a translation made for the L/RC dialogue based on the Latin from CSEL 56.1, *Hieronymus: Epistulae 121-154*, ed. Isidor Hilberg, (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1918), 310.
to take a more functional view of the episcopate, rather than a view of the status of the episcopate, when he writes, “‘Bishop,’ as one of the prudent says, is the name of a work, not of an honor … Therefore we can say in Latin that the bishop superintends, so that someone who would love to preside but not to assist may understand that he is not a bishop.”

Further, L/RC X notes how, for Isidore, presbyters are like Old Testament priests and bishops are like the high priest, virtually equating them in task and function. L/RC X cites Isidore again, “and only on account of authority is ordination and consecration reserved to the high priest, lest if the discipline of the church were arrogated by many it might dissolve concord and generate scandals.”

This view of Jerome, as amplified by Isidore, is not elaborated upon in L/RC X only as a piece of the development of the church’s structure from an historical point of view. More than this, it is used theologically to elucidate how Lutherans and Catholics each have an imbalance in their understanding of the structure of Ministry, and in the characterizations of Wright and Erickson leaning heavily in an Ignatian direction for Lutherans and in a Cyprianic direction for Catholics. L/RC X argues that the church as koinonia of salvation needs to find a balance between these two by resolving the dilemma raised by Jerome through the proposal of an asymmetrical view of the office of Ministry described above.

What this meant for the life of the church was the subject of much debate and consideration into the medieval era. Consequently, when the Reformation occurred

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622 L/RC X, 71-2. De Ecclesiasticis Officis II.5.8, quoted from L/RC X.
623 L/RC X, 71. De Ecclesiasticis Officis II.7.2, quoted from L/RC X.
624 L/RC X incorporated a good deal of patristic material directly into the Agreed Statement. There were background essays to L/RC X, but interestingly none of them were specifically about the fathers, with one exception. The sole member of the dialogue group that is a patristics scholar, Roman Catholic Michael
and the Reformers in Germany were unable – in their view – to retain the episcopacy, there was legitimate precedent in the ancient church for arguing that the presbyter was the only necessary office for Ministry, at least in the situation of the Reformers – an emergency as they saw it. Unfortunately, as history borne out, the emergency situation became the standard situation and much of the koinonia of the early church, while not perfectly exhibited, was lost between the churches of the Reformation and the Church of Rome.625

Here we can again return to the characterizations from Wright’s and Erickson’s work which associate various roles of the bishop with particular church fathers: the teaching role with Irenaeus, the eucharistic role with Ignatius, and the collegial role with Cyprian. L/RC X resonates with some of these characterizations, while also altering and adding to them. In marking the difference between the Catholic and Lutheran understandings of the local church, L/RC X seems to describe the former in Cyprianic terms and the latter in Ignatian terms: the Catholic local church is the diocese headed by a bishop and his priests and the Lutheran local church is the parish led by a pastor. We may add an element to this scheme by recognizing the importance of the role of what we may call Jerome’s view of the relationship between bishop and presbyter. While it was

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625 This brief summary is based on the historical material presented in the sections “The Lutheran Reformation” and “The Sixteenth-Century Catholic Reformation” (L/RC X, 73-87).
not until Vatican II that Catholics taught officially that the primary order of the Ministry is the episcopacy, we can say that there was a strong tradition for this view among Catholics since the Reformation. Indeed, as L/RC X argues historically, leading into the Reformation the structures of the Ministry were unsettled and the Reformation controversies forced the Reformers’ hand toward Jerome’s position because none of the Catholic bishops in Germany sided with the Reformers.

And while the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have seen both further alienation between Lutherans and Catholics (with Vatican I and Lutheran reactions) and renewed communication and reconciliation (with Vatican II and bilateral ecumenical dialogues), there yet remains the need for both churches to look back across their shared history into the earliest church for guidance in overcoming their differences. To this end, L/RC X exposes the way in which both churches have looked to the early church for support in their emphases on how ecclesial koinonia is to be expressed; how each church is in some way doing so legitimately; and how it is that both churches need to work together to overcome their one-sided views toward the end of “repentance and conversion needed for

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626 The *Catechism of the Council of Trent* on Holy Orders claims, “Now although (the sacerdotal order) is one alone, yet it has various degrees of dignity and power.” The *Catechism* then goes on to describe the degrees of the priesthood, which consists of priests, bishops, archbishops, patriarchs, and finally the pope. So, here we can see that there is no difference between bishops and priests in regard to the nature of their positions, only in regard to their responsibilities. See <http://www.catholicapologetics.info/thechurch/catechism/Holy7Sacraments-Orders.shtml>, accessed 8-22-11. Once we get to Vatican II, however, this has shifted, so that we get the third chapter of *Lumen Gentium* (§18-29) which sets the episcopacy as the order of Ministry that is by nature different from and higher than that of the priesthood and the deaconate. The clearest expression is from *LG* 21, which reads, “the Sacred Council teaches that by Episcopal consecration the fullness of the sacrament of Orders is conferred, that fullness of power, namely, which both in the Church’s liturgical practice and in the language of the Fathers of the Church is called the high priesthood, the supreme power of the sacred ministry.” See <http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html>, accessed 22 August, 2011.
healing the wounds of our division” precisely by looking back to that shared history and reflecting theologically.  

In making “Recommendations for an Ecumenical Way Forward”, L/RC X asks the most pertinent question of the work, “[w]hat follows for the relations between our churches from the analysis above, supported by the biblical and historical explanations below?” This is where specific proposals are offered for the sake of the koinonia of the church, the koinonia of salvation. The first part of the Agreed Statement is exactly as mentioned, a theological analysis of what it means for Lutherans and Catholics to strive for unity in the structure of ministry for the end of ecclesial koinonia. In doing so, it stresses the asymmetry between the expressions and understandings of the local church, along with their offices of Ministry, which arose very early in the life of the church. These have had repercussions on the church ever since and continue to prove difficult today. The key factor in L/RC X for the present study is to note that the dialogue used the historical development of the order of Ministry and the fathers’ reflections on this as precedent in order to emphasize comparable function of Ministry between Lutherans and Catholics that might become a means for overcoming the ecumenical divide which still exists over this issue.

The central recommendation calls for the two churches to continue the kind of ecumenical reflection shown in this dialogue round:

We recommend that our churches recognize our common understanding of the interdependent structures of church life and ministry, namely, the diocese/synod with its bishop and the parish/congregation with its pastor or priest. This common understanding is reflected in a shared sense of the single sacrament of Order.

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627 L/RC X, 48.
628 L/RC X, 45.
(sacramentum Ordinis) or the one office of ministry (Amt). The differences between us in emphasis and terminology need not be church-dividing even though they challenge each church to overcome imbalances in its own tradition. In response to this, the Catholic participants acknowledge that the Lutheran adoption of a solely presbyteral form of Ministry “was not a conscious rejection of all earlier tradition, but instead bore significant continuities with New Testament, patristic, and medieval understandings.” Based on such a realization, a further recommendation is made; namely, that the Roman Catholic Church translate the Latin phrase defectus ordinis descriptive of the Lutheran Ministry as “deficiency” instead of “lack.” The latter connotes a simple binary view: either there is an Order of Ministry or there is not. The former allows for the Roman Catholic Church to view the Lutheran Ministry as “real but imperfect.” From the Lutheran side, since the office of bishop was a seminal expression of ministry in the early church, and since the Reformers did not wish to forego this office due to any inherent problems with the office itself, there ought to be an effort exerted toward the end of recovering this office. As the Lutheran participants write:

Lutherans also need repentance and conversion to take steps toward healing the wounds of our division. They must constantly reassess some of their own traditions of ordained ministry. … The office of bishop as regional pastor is the normal polity of the church, ‘a gift of the Holy Spirit,’ and it implies bishops in communion with other ministers exercising episkopé. A church may be compelled to abandon such a shared episcopal office for a time, but it should return to it whenever possible.

629 L/RC X, 46. This is the first of a series of recommendations which address the issues of ministerial office and structure; from the fractured koinonia of the churches to the need for repentance, from the official recognition of the Office of Ministry between the churches to the regular and everyday life of the faithful in the parish and congregation (L/RC X, 45-56).
630 L/RC X, 49.
631 L/RC X, 50.
632 L/RC X, 51.
These two discernments of the Catholics and Lutherans form the basis for the common challenge which lies before both churches. Along with the asymmetry of understanding regarding the local church, its office of Ministry, and expressions of koinonia, there is an asymmetry of recognition as well. The Agreed Statement claims, “Lutheran churches are able fully to recognize Catholic ordained ministries on the basis of ecumenical developments, but the Catholic Church has not fully recognized the ordained ministries of a church such as the ELCA.” Accordingly, there is need for further and deeper ecumenical work, that the koinonia of salvation that is the church may exhibit full visible unity.

**Conclusion**

Before I move to a general summary and conclusions, I offer the following two tables which present various points about how the L/RC used the fathers in ecumenical arguments. The first table shows where the fathers appear in the published material of the four rounds we have been examining in this chapter. The first significant point to notice is that the church fathers are used directly in the Common Statements of all the rounds. Further, the L/RC used the fathers in background essays of various types. These essays encompassed a range of topics, and some were extensive studies of the fathers themselves.

Table 6 also shows that there was no specific patristic study for L/RC III, on the Eucharist as sacrifice. L/RC III, however, did use the fathers in other background essays and in the Common Statement itself. Where there were specific patristic studies, they

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633 L/RC X, 51.
were done by those most qualified, either patristic scholars (in the case of the Roman Catholics) or by historical theologians (in the case of the Lutherans). The one significant note to make here is the patristic study written for L/RC V, on papal primacy. As mentioned above, this round commissioned a lengthy study of the early church. The work was divided between James McCue and Arthur Carl Piepkorn, not because there was an overwhelming need for a Catholic and Lutheran presentation, but because the amount of work was quite large and both men were well accomplished. The majority of the use of the church fathers in L/RC X is in the Agreed Statement itself which is divided into two parts: the first is the theological and ecumenical statement by both churches together on the ways to deepen communion in structures and ministries, the second is an exploration of the biblical and historical support for being able to strive for such a deepening. As mentioned in the discussion of L/RC X above, the only patristic investigation was how the fathers were understood in the medieval era and into the sixteenth century.

A last point to note from Table 6 is that both Lutherans and Catholics used the fathers in many different kinds of background essays other than ones focused on patristic studies.
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<th>TABLE 6 ~ PRESENTATIONS IN THE L/RC THAT USED THE CHURCH FATHERS AND OTHER ANCIENT SOURCES IN AN ECUMENICAL ARGUMENT</th>
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<td>Essays on other subjects but that use the fathers</td>
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<td>McCue (RC) – on transubstantiation</td>
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* Walter Burghardt was asked to present some summary thoughts that he had coming out of an international Lutheran-Catholic meeting in 1969. McCue was asked to do a fuller study for this U.S. L/RC IV specifically.
Table 7 offers a list of the specific fathers cited or referred to in the four rounds we are examining in this chapter. It is significant to notice that the list of fathers here is much less than the list of the fathers found in L/RC VII and VIII, on justification and on the saints and Mary. Those two rounds, examined in a previous chapter, studied the fathers in order to construct historical background to the ecumenical arguments of the rounds and did not use them in the arguments themselves. As in previous chapters, the fathers used with greater frequency are listed in **bold italics** and of those the ones used jointly are marked with a ✔, which in this case are the same.

Another significant point is to note which fathers appear either three or four times: Augustine, Clement, Cyprian, Ignatius, Irenaeus, and Jerome. However, just because these fathers appear this number of times does not mean that they were significant in each and every case. For instance, Augustine and Cyprian only make an impact in one round of the dialogue each. Augustine was important to L/RC III as it expressed how there is a dual agency at the Eucharist; both God and the church offer Christ. Cyprian was important to L/RC V as one who held to a “universalist” ecclesiology, an ecclesiology which begins with an understanding of the unity of the whole church and how it extends into the world.

The other three fathers on this list are used more significantly. Ignatius makes an impact on L/RC IV, V, and X. L/RC IV uses Ignatius in a discussion of the historical lacunae which existed in history regarding the ordination to the presbyterate by bishops in apostolic succession. In contrast to what is described in the *Didache*, L/RC IV uses Ignatius to substantiate an early version of the authoritative position of the bishop in relation to his presbyters. This is essentially the same use L/RC X puts Ignatius to;
Ignatius is the earliest evidence for a three-fold ministry of bishop/presbyter/deacon. L/RC V uses Ignatius as one who, in contrast to Cyprian, held to a eucharistic “communio” ecclesiology, an ecclesiology which begins with the eucharistic experience of each local congregation and goes on to relate each such church to other churches that are participating in the same eucharistic experience.

Irenaeus is important for L/RC V and X because he is instrumental for explaining the rise and character of metropolitan sees in the early church.

Jerome is important for L/RC IV and X. L/RC IV uses Jerome in the same discussion it uses Ignatius, regarding the historical lacunae regarding the ordination to the presbyterate by bishops in apostolic succession. Jerome is evidence for a plasticity with respect to the relationship between the office of bishop and the office of presbyter; indeed, Jerome stands as one who proposes a synonymity between the two. L/RC X uses Jerome for the same point, i.e. to describe the relationship of the distinctions between bishop and presbyter. In L/RC X, Jerome significantly informs the dialogue’s central offering, namely that Catholics and Lutherans consider that there may be an “asymmetrical” relationship between bishop and presbyter concerning their positions and responsibilities.
One final issue needs comment in this conclusion, the relationship between the employment of communion ecclesiology and the use of the church fathers in these four rounds. Only fragmentary elements of the nascent communion ecclesiology are present in the first three of these rounds, with a much fuller vision of communion ecclesiology is in the fourth. In all of these, both specific church fathers and the historical developments of the early church feature in the ecumenical arguments three basic ways: as sources for understanding, as models for ways of thought or manners of practice, and as precedent for contemporary thought or practice. As we have seen these have been made more
specific depending on the particular topic of a round, sometimes with the fathers being
used in more than one way in a single round.

There is no program to this relation between the use of the fathers and
communion ecclesiology; that is, the L/RC does not have a set pattern or template
whereby the fathers are used in relationship with communion ecclesiology. Rather, the
relation is specific to each dialogue round. For L/RC III the relation seems to be merely
an association; for L/RC IV and V it seems to be a correlation; and for L/RC X there is an
intentional correlation. From L/RC III to L/RC X then there is a progressive intensity in
the use of the fathers that coordinates with the progressively stronger use of communion
ecclesiology: from association to emerging correlation to intentionally full correlation.
This is no accident since the fathers provide the groundwork and stimulus for the use of
communion ecclesiology.

The association between communion ecclesiology and the church fathers in L/RC
III is between that communion of God with the church through the Eucharist and the
work of Augustine. L/RC III uses Augustine as a source for understanding in order to
explain how the church, because of its connection to Christ, offers itself and thereby
offers Christ in the Eucharist. This use helped remove the obstacle of misunderstanding
between the two sides regarding eucharistic sacrifice. The element of communion
ecclesiology present here is that communion between the triune God and the church.
What L/RC III is describing is the “ecclesial character of the eucharistic presence of
Christ,” to use Thomas Ambrogi’s phrase (quoted above).

The correlation between communion ecclesiology and the fathers in L/RC IV is
that between the communion’s office of Ministry and Ignatius, the Didache, and Jerome.
L/RC IV stressed the communion of the universal church in order to draw the distinction between that church’s ministry (a task or service which is deputed to the whole church) and its Ministry (a position filled by individuals charged with particular and specific tasks based on proclaiming the gospel and building up the body of believers). This use of communion ecclesiology helped set the stage whereon the fathers played a role in the discussion of the form of this latter Ministry. Specifically, Ignatius, the Didache, and Jerome were used as models for how to conceive of apostolicity that broadened the concept and allowed the Catholics to move toward acknowledging the Lutheran form of Ministry as legitimate.

The correlation between the church fathers and communion ecclesiology in L/RC V is similar to that of L/RC IV; in this case, that between role of the communion’s papal primacy and Ignatius and Leo. L/RC V explores the early church and the church fathers to find elements of communion ecclesiology (expressed in the figure and thought of Ignatius), along with elements of what was termed “universalist” ecclesiology (expressed in the figure and thought of Cyprian). L/RC V found that while there were those who held to a “universalist” ecclesiology, it was the sense of communion ecclesiology that was most prevalent. Thus it noted that the early rise of collegiality among bishops and later Roman primacy should be set in the context of the church as communion. This correlation between the fathers and communion ecclesiology is further evidenced in L/RC V’s norms for the renewal of papal structures, where Leo, in particular, is cited as one who himself held to something like principles of “legitimate diversity” and “collegiality.” Additionally, the development of the papal office and its ministry is used as precedent for formulating and stressing the “Petrine function” of that very ministry.
Here, L/RC V holds up Leo I and Gregory the Great as primary examples of where this development led.

Finally, L/RC X makes explicit use of communion ecclesiology to fix the direction of its work, bringing an intentional correlation between the structures and ministries of the communion of salvation and Jerome and Isidore of Seville. In particular it claims that the communion of the church is one of salvation where “the church shares in salvation, shares salvation with others, and is a community shaped by salvation,” to use the language from L/RC X’s Agreed Statement. The focus of L/RC X is the structures and ministries of this communion of salvation. This is where the patristic development of the episcopacy (for example as described in the writings of Ignatius, I Clement, and Polycarp) and the church fathers’ theological assessment of it (particularly Jerome and Isidore of Seville) make their greatest impact and offering. L/RC X uses this development and assessment as precedent in order to argue for legitimate asymmetry between the Lutheran and Catholic understandings of the positions and responsibilities of bishops and presbyters.

The manner in which the L/RC uses the fathers is significant because the fathers are being used to make direct contributions in formulating ecumenical arguments. This is done in a way that is commensurate with the kind of theologians the fathers were. They were practical-minded writers who were first and foremost concerned about the life and activity of the church. Because of this, they were not systematicians striving to construct an encompassing body of thought. Similarly, the L/RC’s endeavors are mainly practically minded, i.e., theirs is an attempt at finding ways for Lutherans and Catholics to move toward ecclesial unity. Thus, the use of the fathers with the most impact is when
the L/RC employs these practically minded ancient voices in the present-day conversations about how the life and activity of the church can become realized more fully between Lutherans and Catholics.

In this chapter we have examined the most constructive expression of this work. The topics included the role of the church in the sacrifice of the Eucharist, the relationship between the Eucharist and the office of Ministry, the papal role in the universal church, and the structures and Ministries of the church (especially as regards the episcopal office and duties): all of these eminently practical and visible expressions of the life and activity of the church. And just here, the fathers have made their greatest offering, because they have been used as sources of understanding, models of thought and practice, and precedents for thought the practice that have been instrumental in informing and shaping the constructive ecumenical arguments that have moved the Lutherans and Catholics of the L/RC toward convergence, consensus, or agreement. In the next chapter I will draw further conclusions about the importance of the L/RC’s uses of the fathers on a broader scale and comment on where and how they have been helpful and where and how they have not, and possibly simply cannot be helpful.
This final chapter will provide an opportunity for me to draw some conclusions regarding the usefulness of the church fathers in the ecumenical dialogue between Lutherans and Catholics. How much aid have these ancient voices been able to provide? In order to address this question this chapter will have three main parts. In the first, I will revisit the similarities and differences between the situation of the sixteenth century and the ecumenical movement. In the second, I will again discuss the importance of communion ecclesiology in the ecumenical relationship between Lutherans and Catholics. And in the third, I will offer an analysis of how the fathers have proved beneficial and limited, and in what ways, for the U.S. L/RC dialogue.

The main point I will stress in this section is that the fathers have been used more creatively and expansively in the contemporary ecumenical movement than they were in the sixteenth century. Here I will focus on what I called the first two episodes of interaction between the Reformers and the Catholics in the sixteenth century. The first was the exchange begun by the proposed Augsburg Confession, to which the Catholics replied with their Confutation, which in turn inspired Melanchthon’s Apology to the
The second was the meeting of and publications from the Council of Trent, which Martin Chemnitz worked to refute (in large measure) with his Examination of the Council of Trent.

In the first episode both sides were speaking directly with one another in an attempt to find some way of resolving the rifts that were occurring between the Reformers and the Catholics. At least this was the case with the Augsburg Confession and the Roman Confutation, if not by the time of Melanchthon’s Apology to the Augsburg Confession. In doing so, the Reformers used the fathers as authoritative voices insofar as they were witnesses of adherence to and coherence with the Scriptures. That is, the fathers were legitimate sources for the Reformers when they were deemed reliable, obedient expositors of the Bible. The Catholics used the fathers as authoritative voices insofar as they were corroborators of the teaching authority of the church. That is, the fathers were legitimate sources for the Catholics when they were deemed to be expressing and upholding the teachings and traditions of the church as it was bequeathed to the church’s care throughout time. Thus we have already from the start of this episode a main characteristic difference between the two sides. As I observed in an earlier chapter, the contemporary ecumenical situation is like the first sixteenth century episode in that the Lutherans and Catholics of the U.S. L/RC dialogue are in direct conversation with one another. It is unlike this episode in that the two sides have their own ecclesial authorities.

This main difference between the Reformers and the Catholics carried over into the second episode, where the two sides were not in any meaningful conversation with one another; the time for reconciliation already past. In this case, the Reformers had
already formed their own system of ecclesial authority and were not under the authority of Rome. Here we saw that the Catholics continued to use the fathers as corroborative of the teaching authority of the church, even how the fathers could serve as models for how the church authorities were to receive and hand on the Scriptures and the traditions of the church. And we saw how the Reformers continued to use the fathers as witnesses to the centrality of the Bible for the life of the church and as faithful expositors of the Bible and its teachings. Additionally, we can say that the current situation is like the second sixteenth century episode in that the two sides have their own ecclesial authorities, and unlike it in that they are in actual conversations with one another.

The arguments and positions that the Reformers and Catholics formulated in each of these first two episodes were very similar within each side, i.e., what each side was saying was not much changed moving from the one episode to the next. However, the situation between the two episodes had changed dramatically. In the first, there was direct communication between the two sides with a hope – however realistic or slim – that reconciliation could be brokered. In the second, the division was set and the two sides were not communicating with one another. Thus, the difference in the uses of the fathers became entrenched on each side.

My claim here is that the contemporary uses of the fathers in the L/RC are more expansive and creative than the sixteenth-century uses. This claim rests in large part on how participants in the ecumenical movement have given great attention to the nature and structure of the church, attention that has been sharpened and made more penetrating with the advent of communion ecclesiology.
I have described how the sixteenth century Reformers and Catholics used the fathers as witnesses to the proper reading and understanding of the Bible (for the former) and as corroborators of the teaching authority of the church (for the latter). In each case, the fathers were used as elements in the arguments for each side. The L/RC, however, used the fathers jointly in two main ways, as sources for fashioning histories that serve as background to the ecumenical arguments of a particular dialogue round (something distinct from any sixteenth-century use) and as direct elements of the constructive ecumenical arguments that strive for convergence, consensus, or agreement (an argumentative use that is more nuanced than in the sixteenth century).

In the latter case, we can note the greatest contrast with the sixteenth-century uses, because here the fathers are used as sources for understanding a doctrine or teaching, as models for church practice or teaching, and as precedents for church practice or teaching. These were not uses that the L/RC participants had predetermined for the dialogue. They are not even categories which the participants may have even been fully aware of; rather, they are categories which I have used to describe the ways I have observed the participants’ uses of the fathers. Nevertheless, they are, I think, accurate to what the L/RC does with the fathers. And they clearly go beyond the uses of the Reformers and Catholics of the sixteenth century, who only had one main use each.

The Ramifications of Communion Ecclesiology for Lutherans and Catholics

This work has explored how communion ecclesiology has both been based in part on the church fathers and has opened ways for using the fathers in ecumenical conversations. Neither of these was done in a programmatic fashion, but the evidence
produced in the chapters on communion ecclesiology and on the L/RC dialogue demonstrates a large number of instances in which communion ecclesiology has had this reciprocal function. I have shown a large pattern of such uses that now will help to make sense of the specific uses of the fathers in particular dialogue rounds.

Communion ecclesiology was a growing phenomenon over the course of the L/RC dialogue, which began in 1964. And while the L/RC did not employ it or elements of it throughout, nevertheless, communion ecclesiology was employed either indirectly or directly in the majority of the rounds, six out of ten, when, appropriately enough, the dialogue was focused on the nature, structure, and activities of the church (L/RC III, IV, V, VI, IX, and X). In these cases, the church fathers were used as part of the constructive ecumenical argument. Yet, even here we saw examples of where other ecumenical dialogues had made use of the fathers in their constructive arguments when the L/RC had not: the international Lutheran-Catholic dialogue *Justification and the Church* used them so, only not with regards to justification but with regards to the church; and the international Anglican-Catholic dialogue *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* used them so and in the context of communion ecclesiology.

As we saw above, communion ecclesiology has helped, to varying degrees, to overcome some of the typical ecumenical impasses between Lutherans and Catholics, especially when it comes to the nature, structure, and activities of the church. Part of the reason for this is the characteristic ways Lutherans and Catholics formulate their understandings of communion ecclesiology. I used the typologies of John H. Erickson and Robert Wright (with some modification) to explore how Lutherans tend to formulate a communion ecclesiology along the lines of an Ignatian/Irenaean trajectory. Lutherans
hold that the visible communion of the church is based in the locally assembled
eucharistic community wherein the Word is rightly preached and sacraments duly
celebrated. The office of ministry central to this view is the presbytery. The centrality of
the sacraments represents the Ignatian stress, and the importance of the Word and proper
teaching centered on it represents the Irenaean stress. Catholics tend to formulate a
communion of ecclesiology along an Ignatian/Cyprianic trajectory. Catholics hold that
the visible communion of the church is based on the locally assembled eucharistic
community that is properly related to other such communities through its bishop
(extended through to his priests and extending all the way to the bishop of Rome). The
office of ministry central to this view is the episcopacy. The centrality of the sacraments
represents the Ignatian stress, and the importance of the inter-ecclesial relationship
represents the Cyprianic stress.

These are not the self-consciously patristically-based constructions of communion
ecclesiology that each side has come up with in their studies. Rather, these are helpful
descriptions of tendencies and emphases we can give concerning how Lutherans and
Catholics formulate their respective ecclesiologies of communion and how these
ecclesiologies are illumined by patristic typologies. These ecclesiologies show both that
the notion of communion ecclesiology is broad enough to incorporate views from two
different perspectives such as Lutheran and Catholic, but also that communion
ecclesiology does not simply in and of itself overcome all remaining differences. Instead,
it provides hope for reassessing remaining differences.

For instance, Lutherans will claim that the Lutheran church holds a metaphysical
completeness: the Word is rightly preached and the sacraments are properly administered
among the faithful assembly of believers. God is truly present and his people are really receiving faith and salvation through the life and activities of the church. There is a true communion between God and the people and among the people in the Lutheran church (Augsburg Confession VII). However, (some) Lutherans would acknowledge that there is a kind of juridical incompleteness. Lutherans will generally concede that the office of bishop, as it was established in the earliest days of the church and as it extended into the sixteenth century, is a good and proper office of ministry for the life and good order of the church. Further, it is a good and proper office of ministry for the church today also. This juridical incompleteness even extends to the bishop of Rome; Lutherans can recognize that the Lutheran church is juridically incomplete because there is no official oversight by the pope. Finally, Lutherans will acknowledge that the Lutheran church is historically incomplete. And this is so in two ways: first, the Lutheran church is not historically complete because there are other churches in existence; and second, it is not historically complete because the eschaton has not yet arrived.

Similarly, Catholics will claim that the Catholic Church holds a metaphysical completeness: God is effectively working the means of salvation through the Church. The sacramental life of the Church ensures the presence of God among the ordained and the faithful alike. The Church is the communion of God with the people and communion among the people themselves through the life and activities of the Church. Unlike (some) Lutherans, however, Catholics will not claim that the Catholic Church retains any juridical incompleteness (Dominus Iesus 17). There is a sense in which the Catholic Church is

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634 I qualify this statement because there are some Lutheran groups that do not hold this view. For instance, in the U.S., the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod do not.
Church maintains that it is juridically whole, something different from other churches of the West (which it often calls “ecclesial communions” to mark the difference, see Unitatis Redintegratio 9-22). The communion of the Roman Catholic Church is such that it retains the fullness of ecclesial structure and organization, expressed by the communion of bishops with each other and with the Bishop of Rome as their head. A priest in a parish is an extension of this episcopal oversight and responsibility. However, even as official Roman Catholic teaching claims a metaphysical and juridical fullness of unity that belongs to the Catholic Church, there is acknowledgement that on the historical level its unity is wounded by a lack of full communion with other Christian churches and ecclesial communities.

Communion ecclesiology has become a very helpful framework for doing ecumenical work. In itself it has involved retrieval of patristic sources, and it has allowed for creative uses of these patristic sources. We have gained some insight for how the Lutheran and Catholic positions just given can be described by means of patristic characterization (Ignatian/Irenaean and Ignatian/Cyprianic, respectively). Further we have examined how each side can make use of the fathers within the larger framework of communion ecclesiology to engage each other on remaining differences. In the next section we will explore further some specific examples of how this is the case.

Lastly, I stress that communion ecclesiology has made room for more creative uses of the fathers in the ecumenical dialogue of the L/RC than in the encounters between the Reformers and the Catholics in the sixteenth century. In the episodes of the sixteenth century, the Reformers and Catholics used the fathers in one basic way: as part of the arguments being formulated by one side or the other. Some of these were defensive and
others were more constructive. But in either case, each side was using the fathers to bolster their argument. In the first episode, I maintain, the two sides were making their arguments with the hopes that some kind of reconciliation might be found. Nevertheless, they were still making their arguments on their own, i.e., each side was producing texts for the consumption of the other.

In the L/RC, however, we saw many more uses of the fathers. The greatest difference, and a natural one given the ecumenical tenor of the L/RC’s work, is that the fathers were being used together by the Lutherans and Catholics of the L/RC. In every case but one (as we saw with L/RC I), both sides were endeavoring to use the fathers jointly for the sake of the ecumenical task. This is reflected both in the use of the fathers to construct histories that were background to the ecumenical argument and in the use of the fathers as sources in the ecumenical argument itself. This joint use of the fathers by both Lutherans and Catholics in the L/RC allowed both Lutherans and Catholics to move beyond their uses of the fathers in the sixteenth century. This is to say, while the Lutherans and Catholics each characteristically stressed part of the phrase “the Word of God (Lutheran) in the life of the church (Catholic),” in the L/RC they used the fathers in ways that moved beyond this division so that the Lutherans came to appreciate more fully the importance and role of the institutional structures of the church and Catholics came to express more clearly the central and normative role of the Word of God as the basis for and substantive responsibility of the church. Additionally, communion ecclesiology gave a context in which to view the nature and structure of the church which allowed the Lutherans and Catholics of the L/RC to use the fathers, in particular in the constructive ecumenical arguments, in the various ways I have already cited: as sources for
understanding; as models of ecclesial practice or teaching; and as precedent for ecclesial
practice or teaching.

Where the Ancient Voices Have Been Limited and Where They Have Been Helpful

In this final section, I will examine two main topics that will illuminate how the
church fathers have been limited in their impact on the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue and
where they have been quite helpful for the dialogue. In the first case, I will explore the
topic of justification and how the fathers are of limited use in overcoming the ecumenical
difficulties that have existed between Lutherans and Catholics and that still exist. In the
second case, I will explore the much more hopeful set of topics that surround the issue of
apostolicity. Here we have discovered a great aid in the fathers; their ancient voices have
brought creative and beneficial answers to historically difficult challenges. These
answers are not complete; there are still differences which remain. However, they are
answers that have truly helped Lutherans and Catholics move closer ecumenically.

Justification

Justification has been noted as the ecumenical sticking point between Lutherans
and Catholics since the sixteenth century. Such a statement should come with a
qualification: to the extent that justification can be examined without explicit reference to
or grounding in the church, we can say that it has been such an ecumenical sticking
point.635 When it was treated in the Augsburg Confession and the resulting Confutation,

635 Indeed, such a statement and such a division of the topics between justification and apostolicity most
likely betrays the Lutheran orientation and sensibilities of this dissertation’s author.
neither the Reformers nor the Catholics used the church fathers in their arguments. However, once we reach what I have called the second episode of exchange between the Reformers and Catholics in the sixteenth century, we do have both parties using the fathers. The Council of Trent uses the fathers directly twice and indirectly once in pronouncing its decrees and canons on justification, in particular, defending the Church’s view on the instrumental cause of justification, namely baptism. In this way Trent makes use of the fathers to bolster the Council’s treatment of those aspects of justification which are directly in the keeping of the Catholic Church: baptism and penance. Thus, for Trent, justification cannot be considered in a way that is separable from the Church.

Martin Chemnitz takes exception to the Tridentine formulation concerning baptism as the instrumental cause of justification. His complaint is that Trent names “only the Sacrament of Baptism, while no mention is made of the Word of promise which is peculiar to the Gospel, although the Scripture joins the Word and the sacrament in this office.” For Chemnitz, the Word of God joined to the visible sign of water in baptism is what brings about justification, and justification is nothing else than God’s declaration

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636 Melanchthon used the fathers in his Apology when defending the Reformers’ positions on justification. This was the longest defense of any of the CA’s articles, so naturally one would expect Melanchthon to marshal what forces he could. But his exposition goes far beyond the immediate rejections raised in the Confutation and cannot be addressed in the space I have available.

637 “Decree on Justification,” Denzinger, §799 in The Sources of Catholic Dogma, trans. Roy J. Deferrari (Fitswilliam: Loreto Publications, 2007), 251. Trent cites Ambrose of Milan to explain the instrumental cause of justification, namely baptism. (The three Aristotelean-based categories of causation for which Trent does not use the fathers are the final cause [the glory of God and of Christ and of eternal life], the efficient cause [a merciful God], and the meritorious cause [God’s most beloved only-begotten Son]). Ambrose calls baptism the “sacrament of faith” in his Treatise on the Holy Spirit I.III.42. Additionally, Trent cites Augustine’s On the Trinity XIV.12.15 to explain the unique formal cause of justification, the justice of God: the justice by which God makes human beings just, not the justice by which he himself of just. Trent also alludes to a church father when calling penance a “second plank” to the ship of baptism after the shipwreck of lost grace. Here the Council is referring to Jerome’s Epistle 130 in which he uses the same image.

that the sinner is reconciled to God, a view Chemnitz defends by using the fathers as true expositors of Scripture on this point.\textsuperscript{639} Moreover, he takes the space to set off an entire section devoted to highlighting the “testimony of the ancients concerning justification” in order to stress how the fathers referred to justification as a comforting declaration of reconciliation.\textsuperscript{640}

Trent and Chemnitz’s reaction show quite clearly the impasse that arose in the sixteenth century regarding justification. The Catholics were determined to treat justification as something mediated by and retained within the confines of the Church’s authority as expressed in the sacrament of baptism and the believer’s participation in the life of the Church. The Reformers saw justification as the activity of God first and foremost, however mediated, and thus the sole criterion by which to base all other aspects of the church’s life.

The work of the L/RC in its seventh round, on justification, shows a marked change from these sixteenth-century postures. In L/RC VII the fathers were not used as part of the argument, but instead as sources for helping to construct histories of the concept of justification. This historical construction was itself very helpful for the work of the L/RC. This historical construction, as we saw above in chapter six, had two main components to it. First, the historical construction demonstrated that the problems surrounding the issue of justification are a particularly Western set of problems. The Eastern churches have had no such conundrums about justification; they have traditionally used a vast array of images and terms to describe what Western churches

\textsuperscript{639} Chemnitz, \textit{Examination}, vol. 1, 475-6. Here Chemnitz uses such fathers as Augustine, Ambrose, Hilary, and Cyril of Alexandria.

\textsuperscript{640} Chemnitz, \textit{Examination}, vol. 1, 505-13.
call justification. Second, L/RC VII’s historical construction demonstrated how the Western problems surrounding justification had their genesis in Augustinian and, as importantly or perhaps more so, those who had claimed Augustinian heritage throughout the late ancient period and into the medieval, erecting an elaborate matrix of penitential practices and theologies in doing so.

The Common Statement of L/RC VII takes up and focuses on this second historical construction and uses the fathers as sources for understanding the various means of articulating the notion of justification as they arose throughout the ancient and medieval periods. This was the case largely because Augustine himself used differing views of justification when addressing various audiences over the course of his long career as bishop of Hippo.

So, while the L/RC used the fathers very helpfully to explain the history of justification, especially in the West, it did not use the fathers in the constructive ecumenical argument itself which proposed the doctrine of justification as the criterion by which “to test the practices, structures, and theologies of the church” and which noted a number of “material convergences” on what Lutherans and Catholics understand to be the “fundamental convictions regarding justification and faith.” My examination found that the fathers were not significantly relied upon to formulate these ecumenical convergences and agreements.

Indeed, there are two main points of tension between Lutherans and Catholics regarding justification for which the church fathers seem not very helpful in addressing. The first point concerns the question about whether justification always needs to be

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641 L/RC VII, 69 and 70.
connected with the church. The second point has to do with the issue of just how the doctrine of justification serves as the central truth of the Christian faith. It is typically the case that Catholics will stress the necessity of the connection between the church and justification for the first point and Lutherans will stress justification as the central criterion by which to judge remaining Christian truth in the second. Even so, there are ways in which Lutherans agree with Catholics on the first and Catholics with Lutherans on the second. However, for either case, the church fathers are of limited use.

As the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification acknowledges, there is further work to be done between Lutherans and Catholics concerning the relationship between justification and the church.\textsuperscript{642} The international Lutheran-Catholic dialogue The Church and Justification aptly explains how Lutherans and Catholics have reached a convergence point regarding the Lutheran view of the church as the recipient of salvation and the Catholic view that the church is the mediator of salvation (which plays into the Catholic view of the church as ‘sacrament’).\textsuperscript{643} This is a broader consideration: what is the church’s role regarding salvation. However, this convergence in itself does not answer the further concerns of Lutherans and Catholics regarding justification. As The Church and Justification states, “Catholics ask whether the Lutheran understanding of justification does not diminish the reality of the church; Lutherans ask whether the Catholic understanding of church does obscure the gospel as the doctrine of justification explicates it.”\textsuperscript{644} Regardless, then, of the convergence, there are remaining questions centered on, “(1) the institutional continuity of the church, (2) the ordained ministry as


\textsuperscript{643} The Church and Justification \S 107-34, GiA II, 512-20.

\textsuperscript{644} The Church and Justification \S 166, GiA II, 525.
ecclesial institution, (3) the teaching function of the church’s ministry, and (4) the jurisdictional function of the church’s ministry.” This is an important remaining difference between Lutherans and Catholics. And it is one that goes beyond the scope of the kind of help that the church fathers can give.

This tension over the relationship between justification and the church regarding the material elements of justification bleeds over into the tension centered on the place of justification as a criterion of truth. L/RC VII discusses how Lutherans, especially in the sixteenth century, were very concerned to make use of the doctrine of justification in order to test what was truly Christian. Catholics, then and since, have pointed out a danger in this position, namely the potential status of this single criterion as almost fully external to the church itself. As L/RC VII states, Catholics “insist that the gospel cannot be rightly interpreted without drawing on the full resources available within the church.” Indeed this multifaceted approach is what is behind Unitatis Redintegratio’s comment that in Catholic doctrine there is a “hierarchy of truths” in relation to the fundamental Christian faith. However, once again, the church fathers are of little help in answering these questions. The fathers simply were not addressing these questions about the fundamental relationship between justification and other Christian truths.

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645 The Church and Justification §174, Gia II, 537.
646 L/RC VII, 56.
647 UR §11. In 1990 the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church produced a short, joint study entitled The Notion of “Hierarchy of Truths” which was meant to explore further what UR might have meant even though UR is very opaque on this point itself. See The Notion of “Hierarchy of Truths”: An Ecumenical Interpretation, Gia II, 876-83.
Apostolicity

If the church fathers are not of great benefit as sources within a constructive ecumenical argument addressing a topic that has not traditionally been treated by both Lutherans and Catholics together as directly related to the structure and nature of the church, like justification, then they have proven themselves beneficial sources when addressing such topics, like those that have to do with apostolicity. To be sure, a large part of why the fathers have proved so helpful in addressing such topics is because they are primarily oriented around the pragmatic and the issues that arise from an occasion or controversy; they are not systematicians trying to explicate all aspects of the faith.648

Apostolicity is present in five of the ten rounds of the L/RC (L/RC III, IV, V, VI, and X) and is a key issue when speaking of the nature, structure, and activities of the church. The L/RC touches on apostolicity in a broad sense of the term; indeed the ways the L/RC treats apostolicity coincide with the way John J. Burkhard describes the term in his book *Apostolicity Then and Now*.649 Burkhard explains apostolicity in the most general terms as that which portrays “the public accessibility of Christianity.”650 He claims that the patristic expression of this apostolicity took shape in four ways: 1) the apostolicity of origin, 2) the apostolicity of doctrine, 3) the apostolicity of life, and 4) the apostolic succession.651 By these terms Burkhard means that 1) there were “principal churches and [a] communion of all the churches among themselves,” 2) there was a “central importance of faith in the teachings of the apostles,” 3) “apostolicity is to be

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648 One could argue that Irenaeus and Tertullian are exceptions to this statement, or more accurately that they are the cause for my qualifying word, “primarily.”
found primarily by examining the full life of the church,” and 4) the apostolic succession is not one of an unbroken historical chain of bishops but “of proper, sacramental succession to the leadership of an apostolic community.”

These four areas of apostolicity find expression in the L/RC, and they do so precisely because the L/RC uses the fathers to frame the discussions of these rounds in terms of the function and purpose of various aspects of apostolicity. Indeed, we saw that the fathers made a significant contribution to the arguments of these rounds. As we explored these rounds I explained the ways in which the dialogue made use of the fathers: as sources for understanding a theological or doctrinal idea; as models for either understanding a theological or doctrinal point or practicing aspects of the faith; and as precedents for either understanding a theological or doctrinal point or practicing aspects of the faith. In the following, I will stress how each of these areas of apostolicity is most noticeably present in these five rounds and how they are based on the L/RC’s uses of the fathers.

The apostolicity of origin is present in the last of the rounds we examined, L/RC X *The Church as Koinonia of Salvation: Its Structures and Ministries*. The apostolicity of origin stresses the original churches, but it also stresses the communion of all churches with one another. The latter is a key element of L/RC X, and this round uses the church fathers as precedent for how to practice this communion. In particular, L/RC X uses the fathers to argue for an asymmetrical view of authoritative ecclesial oversight.

The apostolicity of doctrine is present in two of the rounds, L/RC V and VI, *Papal Primacy and the Universal Church* and *Teaching Authority and Infallibility in the*.

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Church. The apostolicity of doctrine stresses faith as central to the teachings of the apostles. Faith is born, at least in part, from Scripture, but there needs to be a responsible and even authoritative interpretation of it and of the doctrines which arise from such interpretation. These rounds address the role of the papacy and the character of teaching authority in such a process. L/RC V uses the church fathers both as models for understanding and putting into practice the “Petrine function” of the papacy. L/RC VI uses the fathers as precedent for expanding the notion of teaching authority and its relationship to infallibility.

The apostolicity of life is present in two rounds, L/RC III and IV, *The Eucharist as Sacrifice* and *The Eucharist and Ministry*. The apostolicity of life stresses the breadth and multifaceted elements of the life and activities of the church. These two rounds address the practice of worship, in particular the Eucharist, as an element in the life of the church. L/RC III uses the fathers as sources for understanding the Eucharist as both the sacrifice of God and, by participation, the sacrifice of the church; it also uses the fathers as models for sacramental practice, in particular for communing the sick. L/RC IV uses the fathers as models for understanding the very concept of apostolicity itself in order to expand it to include both Catholic and Lutheran ordained ministers as legitimate presiders at the Eucharist.

Finally, the apostolicity of the ordained ministry is taken up in two rounds, L/RC IV, on the Ministry and Eucharist, and L/RC X, on the Ministries of the church in the communion of the church. According to Burkhard, apostolic succession of bishops (in particular) stresses the sacramental connection between those who have served as bishops with those who led the church during the time of the apostles. As just mentioned above,
L/RC IV uses the church fathers as models for understanding how to conceive of the apostolicity of the ordained minister to argue that both Lutheran and Catholic presiders at the Eucharist are valid. L/RC X uses the fathers as precedent for ecclesial practice in order to argue for an asymmetrical view of ecclesial oversight: the earlier patristically-based Lutheran view of oversight being based in the presbyteral office is comparable to the later patristically-based Catholic view of oversight being based in the episcopal office.

These are the ways in which the L/RC has made use of the fathers in order to make ecumenical strides in dialogue. There are real achievements here, ones which the church fathers have helped to inform and shape. Yet, not all of these issues are fully resolved between Lutherans and Catholics. The L/RC has accomplished much in terms of the fullest understanding of apostolicity, but there remains more work to be done.

For our purposes I will focus on two specific areas, the Eucharist and ordained ministry, ones that correspond with two of the four distinctions from Burkhard. But these, in turn, point toward a more general and underlying difference between Lutherans and Catholics regarding the nature and expression of the church.

First, there remain real differences between Lutherans and Catholics over the Eucharist. L/RC III did not register a list of remaining differences regarding the Eucharist, but the international Lutheran-Catholic dialogue *The Eucharist* (1978) did raise and acknowledge such differences. In particular *The Eucharist* points to the differences in liturgical understanding and practice concerning both the duration of

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653 *The Eucharist* in *Growth in Agreement*, eds. Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1984), 190-214. A mistake should be noted: the endnotes to this text are inaccurate. The proper notes can be found the internet version of this document found at <http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/l-rc/doc/e_l-rc_eucharist.html>, accessed 11 October, 2011.
Christ’s presence in the Eucharist and the sacrificial character of the Eucharist. On the first point, Lutherans have been troubled by some of the eucharistic piety that has grown up around the Catholic conviction that Christ is present in the eucharistic elements of bread and wine. Likewise, Catholics have been disturbed by the occasional casual treatment of the elements by Lutherans after a eucharistic celebration. On the second point, Lutherans have been afraid that the Catholic stress on the sacrificial character of the Eucharist detracts from the singular sacrifice of the cross, while Catholics have wondered about the lack of a full understanding of the Eucharist among Lutherans because Lutherans avoid language describing the Eucharist in sacrificial terms.

Second, Lutherans and Catholics are still unsettled regarding aspects of the ordained ministry. While L/RC IV was very positive, and the Roman Catholic reflections were very open in their position to recommend recognition of the Lutheran ecclesial community as church because of the many ways in which Lutherans have retained apostolicity, L/RC X however was more guarded on how far Lutherans and Catholics have actually come. L/RC X highlights, for instance, the critical role of the Catholic position of non-Catholic ordained ministries as being defectus, even though L/RC X itself recommends translating this as “deficiency” instead of “lack.” The main contribution from L/RC X, we should recall, is the argument for the recognition of an asymmetry between the Lutheran and Catholic view of the ordained ministry. The more recent international Lutheran-Catholic dialogue The Apostolicity of the Church (2006) raises some further points where Lutherans and Catholics are still at odds with one another.654

654 The Lutheran World Federation and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, The Apostolicity of the Church (Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2006); hereafter, Apostolicity.
To begin, *Apostolicity* states that the controversy between the two sides is “over what makes a person a rightful holder of a regional ministry and what grounds the power to ordain. At issue is apostolic succession in episcopal office.” This point echoes what we have stated above, that the Roman Catholic view is that the Lutheran ordained ministry is not complete, but lacking, because, as *Apostolicity* states, those Lutherans who ordain “do not act in communion with and as member[s] of the Catholic episcopal college.” Additionally, *Apostolicity* states that Lutherans and Catholics “answer differently the question of how this relation [of the local church] with the universal church is mediated personally and institutionally.” For Catholics this relationship exists in the office of the bishop, while for Lutherans this relationship exists through the power of the Spirit in each place where the Word is proclaimed and the sacraments are celebrated.

As mentioned above, these two areas, the Eucharist and ordained ministry, point to an underlying and more penetrating difference between Lutherans and Catholics. As Cardinal Walter Kasper writes in his most recent book *Harvesting the Fruits*, “Behind the many still unresolved individual questions can be identified one fundamental problem and one fundamental divergence in the understanding of the Church.” Underlying this difference is the issue of the sacramentality of the church. As Kasper states, “Catholics can distinguish but cannot separate the essence of the Church from her concrete form.” For Lutherans, there is no similar problem, since they understand the church to be where

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655 *Apostolicity*, §283.
656 *Apostolicity*, §283.
657 *Apostolicity*, §285.

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the Word is rightly preached and the sacraments rightly administered. Catholics, however, point to the concrete institutional form of the church as a necessary expression of the church’s essence, and one which is the communion of each diocese understood as the eucharistic communion with a bishop as its head in communion with all of the other dioceses throughout the world which are also eucharistic communions with a bishop as their head and the bishop of Rome as the collegial bishop over all.

This last point appears as yet to be at an impasse. Nevertheless, the church fathers have served as instruments in helping the L/RC dialogue move forward on many issues related to apostolicity. Perhaps we can anticipate these ancient voices further influencing and inspiring the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue in the U.S. (as well as in other countries) and internationally towards an ecumenical relationship that will approximate if not embody the full visible unity hoped for in ecumenical circles.

**Final Reflections**

Part of the reason for why the fathers have been so helpful, even in a limited way for justification, is their status as ecumenical sources. The church fathers are not Scripture, so they do not have the same authority as that set of canonical texts (admitting that even here there is a difference between what constitutes the canon between Lutherans and Catholics). The patristic sources are not the biblical sources. Lutherans and Catholics look to the Bible for direction, guidance, and teaching on matters of the faith. And they look with anticipation that Scripture will have an authoritative reply of some kind or another (whether more or less direct depends on the specific matter under investigation). Lutherans and Catholics look in a similar way to the Creeds. These are
authoritative statements of belief borne from many years of deliberation about the nature and persons of God, about the natures and person of Jesus Christ, about the Holy Spirit, and about the people of God as those who hope for a future state with God and all of creation on the last day. These statements have authority and give direction for how believers are to make sense of the faith.

But Lutherans and Catholics do not look to the church fathers in the same way as they look to the Bible or the Creeds. The fathers do not have the same kind of status or authority. While this is a limiting factor with regard to the fathers, it is also a factor that allows for potentially more creative uses of the fathers. Both the Lutherans and Catholics are heirs of the patristic era, and neither one of them exclusively so. Lutherans and Catholics can legitimately claim the fathers as authoritative sources and in different ways from one another. But, as we had seen in the U.S. L/RC the differences were not what became the focus. Indeed, with the one exception of L/RC I, the L/RC uses the fathers jointly in doing its ecumenical work. This does not mean that there are not differences between the two sides, but it demonstrates that these seem to be increasingly commonly held sources for ecumenical work.

May these ancient voices continue to speak for ecclesial unity, and may they be heard and used for such churchly relationship.


________. *Letter to the Catholics*. Translated by Maureen Tilley, unpublished ms.


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