Günther Wassilowsky

The Myths of the Council of Trent and the Construction of Catholic Confessional Culture

I.   Images of Trent

What would the history of religion be without myths? What would it be without such symbolic narratives that reduce complex historical reality, narratives about religious heroes or events that time and again create new collective faith identities? In fact, the importance of historical myths for understanding the history of Christian confessions can hardly be overestimated. Without these symbolic 'narratives of origin', no Lutheran, Reformed, or Catholic Confessional Church could have evolved and assumed its eventual shape. Indeed, the early modern confessions employed the construction of pithy models that evoked emotions and intellectual interpretation – whether in the form of narratives in popular legends or learned historiography, actual pictorial representations on the front pages of pamphlets, paintings of historical scenes, or ritual performances during days of commemoration or during holidays[1] – created, formed and acknowledged their own image, as well as that of the Other. In turn, these mythical interpretations of history determined the action of the various Christian denominations in every area of what has recently been termed 'confessional culture'.[2] Therefore, a cultural history of Christian confessions would largely have to consist of retracing the construction of such denomination-constituting model narratives (*Mustererzählungen*) in the various media of those times and in identifying them once they were deployed in within the various segments of each respective confessional culture.

In the Protestant sphere, myths about individuals – especially specific reformers – generally mark the starting-point of the denomination's formation. In Catholicism, by contrast, it is the myth of one particular event that appears to play

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1 H. Münkler, *Die Deutschen und ihre Mythen* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2009), 14, distinguishes three outward manifestations of political myths which, as he says, are closely interrelated: narration, image and performance.

2 More about the concept at the end of this essay.

an all-decisive role, viz. the Council of Trent. This ecclesiastical assembly, which convened for three sessions between 1545 and 1563 in a beautiful Alpine town that is located within the valley of the River Adige, triggered a barrage of inter-pretations that were more highly controversial and contradictory than any other single council in modern Church history.[3] Many of these interpretative battles began in the years leading up to the *Tridentinum*. For over two decades, for example, diverging ideas as to how the Council should be set up and where it should be held prevented its manifestation. And when the assembly did finally meet, the various groups of protagonists were constantly at odds with one an-other about its actual purpose and what it fundamentally signified. Furthermore, outside observers, some of whom were quite far away, seized this event and turned it into a symbolically charged object that revealed the exact essence of the traditional Creed and constitution of the papal Church.

The debate about the Council's necessity and shape, however, began much earlier, with Luther's dispute over indulgences and his first confrontations with Church authorities in 1518 and 1519.[4] Over the subsequent decades, this debate produced a flood of pamphlets raising the issue of a Council in both Protestant camps and papal loyalist ones.[5] This literature produced a set of stereotyped characterisations of the Council of Trent (depending on whether the position held refuted or esteemed it) entirely independently from what was largely really happening, creating a description of events that would endure with an aston-ishing persistence for centuries.

The image of Trent by Reformation-oriented publications generally pointed out the following: the theological content of this Council was not based on the Scriptures and was therefore firmly directed against Reformation theology. From a formal and practical procedural point of view, this Council must therefore be denounced for two main reasons. Firstly, it took place under the tyranny of the Pope and thus proceeded in an un-free and chaotic manner. Secondly, non-clerics, meaning the non-ecclesiastical princes, did not participate enough. A

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3 Cf. Simon Ditchfield's article, where he attempts to revisit the *Tridentinum*, to contextualise it in its actual space and time, and to exclude all obscuring images: S. Ditchfield, "Trent revi-sited", in G. Dall'Olio/A. Malena/P. Scaramella (ed.), *La fede degli italiani. Per Adriano Pro-speri* (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2011) 1.357–70.

4 Luther, already in *Freiheit des Sermons päpstlicher Ablaß und Gnade belangend*, which is from June/July 1518, held the opinion that a General Council would be needed in order to decide on the issue of indulgences. See *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (henceforth WA) (73 in 80 vol.; Weimar: Böhlau, 1883–2009), vol. 1.

5 Th. Brockmann, *Die Konzilsfrage in den Flug- und Streitschriften des deutschen Sprachraumes 1518–1563* (Schriftenreihe der Historischen Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 57; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), could identify 562 printed materials in the German-speaking area between the years 1518 and 1563 that had statements relating to the Council including, in a stricter sense, 179 conciliary writings.

positive Reformation-oriented understanding of the Council developed in many respects by distinguishing itself vis-à-vis this negative depiction of Trent. In turn, Old Believers conceived a positive counter-image, of Trent in particular and of general councils fundamentally, in the literature surrounding the controversy.

These myths and counter-myths of the Council of Trent were developed early in the meetings and are most vividly illustrated in the very first iconographic products of the *Tridentinum*. Indeed, the discursive images on the Council in contemporary publications are already clearly objectified by the earliest paintings or engravings of Trent. We find, for instance, a genuinely Catholic image of Trent in the *Tridentinum's* oldest pictorial representation, produced anonymously by a Venetian printing shop during the Council's final year in 1563 (Ill. 1). This copperplate engraving, which attempted to induce the fiction of historical authenticity by representing the event as exactly as possible, went on to formatively influence the *Tridentinum's* entire imagery tradition.[6] This engraving, reprinted hundreds of times and modified in multiple ways, not only provided the model and formula for almost all successive images of the Council, but also established an entirely new kind of Council iconography: for the first time – and in accordance with historical fact – a conciliar assembly is depicted without the person of the Pope.[7]

The engraving shows a general congregation during the third Council session in the Santa Maria Maggiore Church of Trent. The collegiate community of the episcopal Council fathers sit in a half-circle in six elevated rows. In the centre of the empty space one can recognize the Spanish ambassador. Behind him, sitting at a small table, is the Council secretary. Across from the plenum are the papal legates whom the Pope appointed to be his representatives in Trent. It is not a coincidence that the particular prevailing motive within the images is the portrayal of the sitting Council fathers as *iudices fidei*. Furthermore, the Pope's representatives do not sit at a higher level than the highest row of the Council fathers. Noticeably, they do not sit "in capite loci", as stipulated in the Curia

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6 Robert Pancheri, drawing upon an archival holding of conciliar iconographic testimonials in Trent's Diocese Museum – put together by art historian Kurt Rathe (1886–1952) (who had fled to Rome due to anti-Semitic persecution), on the occasion of the Council's Jubilee in 1945 and inspired by Hubert Jedin – has succeeded in writing a monograph on the history of the images of the Council of Trent. See: R. Pancheri, *Il concilio di Trento. Storia di un'immagine* (Temi di storia dell'arte 1; Trent: Tipografia Editrice Temi, 2012). Cf. also R. Pancheri, "Il concilio di Trento: storia di un'immagine", in R. Pancheri/D. Primerano (ed.), *L'uomo del Concilio. Il cardinale Giovanni Morone tra Roma e Trento nell'età di Michelangelo (Museo Diocesano Tridentino, Trento 4 aprile – 26 luglio 2009)* (Trent: Tipografia Editrice Temi, 2009) 103–49.

7 For the essentials on the iconography of the Council, see: H.J. Sieben, *Konzilsdarstellungen – Konzilsvorstellungen. 1000 Jahre Konzilsikonographie aus Handschriften und Druckwerken* (Würzburg: Echter, 1990).
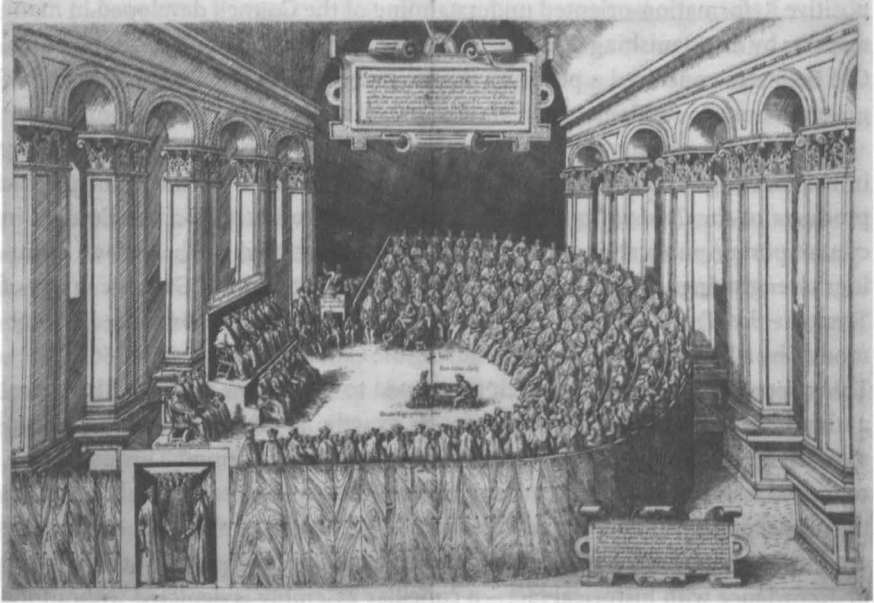
Ill. 1: Anonymous, *The General Congregation of the Council of Trent in the Santa Maria Maggiore Church of Trent* [Venice, 1563], © Trent, Castello del Buonsiglio, Momumenti e collezioni provinciali, inv. MN2821, reprinted in Pancheri/Primerano (ed.), *L'uomo del Concilio*, 331.

ceremonial rules of 1488.[8] Rather, the entire seating arrangement is rotated 90 degrees. The papal legates sit at the same height on the left side of the main nave, opposite to the Council fathers, and thus the plenary assembly appears wholly unified.

The central message of this visual construction of Trent would probably have been obvious to every viewer: the Council of Trent was not dominated by the Pope. Rather, the Council was represented as a self-realisation of the Church's fundamentally episcopal constitution, one that did not seek to eliminate the papal element, but that clearly incorporated it into the episcopal whole. Having the Fathers and legates sitting together in a harmonious and orderly fashion within the Council's assembly hall ought to express both a fundamental consensus among the bishops and the Pope and, the regularity of the rules of the decision-making procedures put into practice in Trent.

As such, it is entirely different from the presumed earliest engraving of Trent, with a Protestant provenance, which can be found as the frontispiece on the title-page of Martin Chemnitz's *Examen Concilii Tridentini*, first printed in Frankfurt

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8 M. Dykmans (ed.), *L'œuvre de Patrizi Piccolomini ou le Cérémonial papal de la première Renaissance* (Studi e Testi 293; Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1980), 211.

in 1574 (Ill. 2).[9] As its title makes clear, the entire "doctrina Papistica" is rigorously examined here on the basis both of the Scriptures and of the consensus of the orthodox Church fathers, and it is categorically dismissed in favour of the Christian Truth. In this opus, which was produced after the Council had officially ended, the pivotal anti-Tridentine arguments of Reformation publications were once again taken up and summarized in an all-out assault. With its numerous editions and translations into both German and French, Chemnitz's work probably represents the Protestant Church's most influential interpretation of Trent, as it has hardened the reformers' image of the events of the Council.

The Protestant copperplate engraver, who illustrated Chemnitz's Frankfurt edition, likely knew the Catholic engraving of 1563. His conception all too obviously represents its deconstructing counter-image. Moreover, certain elements such as the Council's secretary Massarelli (here in front on the right, sitting on a stool with his back to the viewer) and the theologian on the pulpit (upper left), were taken from the older engraving and set into an obviously different visual context. Two categorical innovations, however, are constitutive for this Protestant image of Trent: firstly, the conciliar assembly is clearly shown to be taking place in the presence of a pope, *in persona*, who lords over everything to such an extent that the *Tridentinum* may be discredited as mere papist indoctrination; secondly, the entire event – when measured against the orderliness in the Catholic engraving – is disavowed as sheer excitement and hectic chaos, which renders impossible any decisions that would be pleasing in God's eyes. Even the complaint in the Council's publications concerning the inadequate participation of secular authorities is depicted by having representatives in the left half of the engraving appear as mere onlookers of the events.

The myths and counter-myths of Trent, as narrated by these images, left a centuries-long imprint on the fundamental makeup of the perception of this Council. In the final analysis, they have even determined and influenced modern discourse. For example, the first piece of historiography on the *Tridentinum*, viz. *Istoria del Concilio Tridentino*, which the Venetian state theologian Paolo Sarpi (1552–1623) published in London in 1619 under a pseudonym, supported a structural historical thesis that turned Trent into nothing less than a puppet theatre orchestrated from Rome.[10] Even the authors of the most recent Protestant

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9 Cf. R. Mumm, *Die Polemik des Martin Chemnitz gegen das Konzil von Trient. Erster Teil, mit einem Verzeichnis der gegen das Konzil gerichteten Schriften* (Naumburg: Lippert des Rauhen Hauses, 1905); A.C. Piepkorn, "Martin Chemnitz' Views on Trent: The Genesis and the Genius of the Examen Concilii Tridentini", *Concordia Theological Monthly* 37 (1966) 5–37.

10 For an intellectual biography of Paolo Sarpi, see: J. Kainulainen, *Paolo Sarpi: A Servant of God and State* (Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions 180; Leiden: Brill, 2014); cf. also H. Jedin, *Das Konzil von Trient. Ein Überblick über die Erforschung seiner Geschichte* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1948), 62–93.

EXAMINIS

CONCILII TRI-
DENTINI, PER D. D.
MARTINVM CHEMNIZIVM
SCRIPTI, OPVS INTEGRVM: QVATVOR
partes, in quibus præcipuorum capitum totius doctrinæ Papisticæ, fir-
ma & solida refutatio, tùm ex sacræ scripturæ fontibus, tùm ex ortho-
doxorum Patrum consensu , collecta est : vno Volumine com-
plectens. Ad veritatis Christianæ, & Antichristianæ
falsitatis cognitionem , perquàm vtile &
necessarium.

IN PRIMA PARTE HVIVS
Examinis explicantur hi loci.

De Traditionibus.	De Operibus infidel.
De Peccato originis.	De Libero Arbitrio.
De Concupiscentia.	De Iustificatione.
De Vocabulo peccati.	De Fide.
De Conceptione B. Virg.	De Bonis operibus.

Cum Indice diligentissimè collecto: qui præter materiam doctrinæ, scriptura quoq, testimonia
explicata, aut ita citata, vt explicata videantur: nec non Patrum authori-
tates, promptissimè subministrat.

FRANCOFORTI AD MOENVM.

M. D. LXXIIII.

Ill. 2: Martin Chemnitz, *Examen Concilii Tridentini* (Frankfurt am Main: s.n., 1574)

historiography consider the *Tridentinum* as an 'event of the papacy', by means of which the "Roman Catholic Church, which positioned itself decidedly against the Reformation... established the dogmatic foundation upon which the Reform Popes of the second half of the sixteenth century continued to build".[11] Moreover, the current popular image of Trent by contemporary Catholics generally follows the established Protestant interpretations. This was true for both the progressive-liberal adherents of the Second Vatican Council, who gladly celebrate a 'Farewell to Trent' (*Abschied von Tient*[12]), and – what an irony of history! – the Catholic traditionalists, such as those in the Lefebvrian camp. The latter ultimately view Trent as a genuinely papal and solidly anti-Protestant Council and welcome this structure and orientation of the *Tridentinum* wholeheartedly; in turn, they then use it to accuse the latest Council of breaking away from the true Catholic tradition.

Furthermore, apart from its original Protestant elements, Trent's image by today's traditionalists presents yet another feature, one that was incorporated into the Council's myth only during the nineteenth century. An image of Trent began to take shape at that time in ultramontane circles that looked to legitimise the rejection of any form of ecclesiastical renewal. Some believed that the Council of Trent established an "irrevocable norm", which "set forever the proper limit ... for those who are addicted to innovation", now making it possible to put an end to "the modern addiction towards improvement" and to the constant "experimenting and undertaking of projects".[13] From this point, the *Tridentinum* no longer merely stood for an anti-Protestant phalanx, but also for a restorative bulwark against the present, which is evil, liberal and always demanding change.[14]

II.   Corrections to the Image of Trent: The Openness of the *Tridentinum*

Since Leo XIII opened the Vatican's Secret Archive to scholars in 1883, which included all remaining manuscripts regarding Trent, several generations of researchers have participated in a gigantic editorial undertaking, entitled *Con-*

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11 Th. Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Reformation* (Verlag der Weltreligionen; Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2009), 670 and 674.

12 This *Abschied von Trient* is the title of a book published in 1969: J. Bielmaier (ed.), *Abschied von Trient. Theologie am Ende des kirchlichen Mittelalters* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1969).

13 "Das Consil von Trient und die Bearbeiter seiner Geschichte", *Der Katholik* 80 (1841) 97–112, on p. 97.

14 For the history of the commemorating this Council in general, see G. Wassilowsky, "Trient", in Ch. Markschies/H. Wolf (ed.), *Erinnerungsorte des Christentums* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2010) 395–412.

cilium Tridentinum,[15] that has achieved much in terms of the Council's critical reappraisal.[16] Hubert Jedin's four-volume *Geschichte des Konzils von Trient* (*History of the Council of Trent*), published between 1949 and 1975, stands out as a crowning achievement.[17] In his final volume, Jedin, arguably the best informed scholar of the developments within the context of the Council of Trent, comes to the following conclusion: "The Council was not, as Sarpi reckoned, a large-scale fraud."[18] In other words, Jedin thoroughly perceived Rome's attempt to control the assembly from afar, and in his history he meticulously reconstructs this process. However, in his opinion, the papal dirigisme was unsuccessful in entirely quashing the opposition and the freedom of assembly. Thus, in Jedin's account, the Council of Trent appears as a complicated and structurally complex inter-action between Curial-Papalist, Episcopal, and Gallican-Conciliarist forces.[19] The competing claims to validity that emerged during the Council and the question of separation of powers (*Gewaltenfrage*), which is entirely open in a theological sense, prevented the adoption of an explicitly discursive ecclesiology during the Council.

A cultural-historical perspective on councils, which analyses such ecclesias-tical assemblies as performative spaces of action that symbolically point beyond themselves and are interactive, may elaborate Jedin's structural-historical conclusions.[20] The event of the Council was in its own logic equivocal, ambivalent and ambiguous. Trent was at once a papal house synod and an episcopal par-liament. Alternatively put, it could be understood from a variety of different perspectives and was often discerned partly one way or partly another way. Similarly to a "picture puzzle" (*Vexierbild*[21]), one could also observe the event from various angles. From the Pope's point of view, Trent was a papal advisory

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15 *Concilium Tridentinum: Diariorum, actorum, epistularum, tractatuum nova collectio* (13 vol.; Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1901–2001).

16 Cf. the online bibliography of the *Gesellschaft zur Herausgabe des Corpus Catholicorum*: http://tridentinum.ub.uni-freiburg.de/pages/free/suche.php.

17 H. Jedin, *Geschichte des Konzils von Trient* (4 vol. in 5; Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1949–1975).

18 Jedin, *Konzil von Trient*, 4/2.248.

19 A new anthology demonstrates, precisely in the crisis of the third period of sessions, the importance to be attributed to a person like Giovanni Morone: In balancing the forces, diplomatic skill and in crosscutting loyalties: M. Firpo/O. Niccoli (ed.), *Il cardinale Giovanni Morone e l'ultima fase del concilio di Trento* (Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento. Quaderni 80; Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 2010).

20 Cf. my respective attempt: G. Wassilowsky, "Symbolereignis Konzil. Zum Verhältnis sym-bolischer und diskursiver Konstituierung kirchlicher Ordnung", in B. Schmidt/H. Wolf (ed.), *Ekklesiologische Alternativen? Monarchischer Papat und Formen kollegialer Kirchenleitung (15.–20. Jahrhundert)* (Symbolische Kommunikation und gesellschaftliche Wertesysteme. Schriftenreihe des Sonderforschungsbereichs 496, 42; Münster: Rhema, 2013) 37–53.

21 E. Fischer-Lichte, "Einleitung", in E. Fischer-Lichte (ed.), *Theatralität und die Krisen der Repräsentation* (Germanistische Symposien. Berichtsbände 22; Stuttgart: Metzler, 2001) 1–27, on p. 7.

organ with himself as the *dominus loci*. The majority of the Council fathers, however, used this same opportunity to once again hold a true forum of discussion during the general congregations; they practiced communicative forms of encounter, deliberation, and decision-making, and in doing so, they helped to expose both the *auctoritas concilii* and the dignity of the episcopate, thus giving it validity. However, an explicit theme of the respective interpretations would have caused the Council of Trent to fail and was therefore (after a certain point) not in the best interest of either the Popes or the bishops. Both ecclesiologies did remain symbolically present and visible at the Council of Trent, but they did not break it up. Rather, they were integrated by means of the ritual. Diverging interpretations of ecclesiological order, which could not be resolved either by the discursive negotiation of compromises or by authoritative decision, continued to coexist in this way. Both interpretive communities could be members of the one body. The ambiguity of the symbolic event enabled the *Tridentinum* to be held in the first place. However, it also presupposed that one renounced to a textual rendering of the ecclesial order.

Yet, what novel insights has new research brought to light regarding the content that was negotiated and adopted in Trent?[22] Jedin once again examined the Trent resolutions on the reform of the Church,[23] emphasising that the resulting compromises consisted of feasible and consensual resolutions on the most varied of issues. In contrast to the Council's doctrinal decrees, and with regards to its reform decisions, one could hardly overlook the fact that the *Tridentinum* failed to adopt a consistent program that would have systematically encompassed all areas. For example, the Tridentine regulations that dealt with improving the education of the clerics, maintaining the residence of parish priests and bishops, enhancing general spiritual welfare, and revitalizing the institution of the synods, etc., are likewise found in reform agendas from the late Middle Ages. These ideas faced massive resistance at Trent and resulting in the emergence of a conglomeration of reform resolutions, most of which were

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22 In what follows I refer time and again to results of a conference that took place from September 18 to September 21, 2013, entitled "Das Konzil von Trient und die katholische Konfessionskultur (1563–2013)" and hosted by the *Gesellschaft zur Herausgabe des Corpus Catholicorum*. This conference in Freiburg im Breisgau celebrated the 450th anniversary of the Council's conclusion. See P. Walter/G. Wassilowsky (ed.), *Das Konzil von Trient und die katholische Konfessionskultur (1563–2013)* (Reformationsgeschichtliche Studien und Texte 163; Münster: Aschendorff, 2016); cf. also a report on the conference by V. Soen, "Chronique: Conference Report Das Konzil von Trient und die katholische Konfessionskultur (1563–2013), Freiburg, 18–21 September 2013", *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 108 (2013) 1431–4.

23 And after him, also K. Ganzer, "Das Konzil von Trient – Angelpunkt für eine Reform der Kirche?", in K. Ganzer, *Kirche auf dem Weg durch die Zeit. Institutionelles Werden und theologisches Ringen. Ausgewählte Aufsätze und Vorträge*, H. Smolinsky/J. Meier (ed.) (Reformationsgeschichtliche Studien und Texte. Supplementband 4; Münster: Aschendorff, 1997) 212–32.

characterised by both compromise and a certain randomness; the solutions also did not infringe upon the curial beneficial system. Furthermore, the Council generally excluded discussions on the reform of the Curia and papal offices of Rome from the start. The contention that the *cura* or *salus animarum* represented a fully organising leading idea (*Leitidee*) in the Tridentine's reform guidelines was, with modern hindsight, a rationalising post-conciliar abstraction.

As for the doctrinal resolutions, there predominated for a long time the idea – one that had also always comprised an integral feature of the myth of Trent – that the Council adopted unanimous, internally coherent, systematic, monolithic and decidedly anti-Protestant dogmatics, which in turn gave rise to the post-Tridentine Catholic Church emerging as an anti-Protestant system that was homogenous and united.[24] Even those who reckon that the systematic stringency and internal coherence of Trent's doctrinal decrees are considerably lower, observe (and deplore) that a habitus of "distancing oneself from the reformers" and of intending "to eliminate all misleading interpretations" had led in Trent, according to Ganzer, to both "a reining in compared to the theological diversity in the Middle Ages" and to a marginalisation of humanistically inspired innovative approaches in favour of time-honoured scholasticism.[25]

Most recently, however, theological historical research has emphasised a new and different course that makes Tridentine doctrinal conclusions appear as a result of a new hermeneutics in an entirely novel light.[26] One has discovered in Trent's doctrinal body a much greater openness of interpretation, considerably extensive leeway, an intentionally vague terminology, and the oft-repeated motivation to meet the Protestants halfway, theologically speaking, as frequently as possible. It would appear that from its very beginning the *Tridentinum* presupposed that all believers in Christ still held to the principles of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed.[27] In contrast to conventional well-worn versions –

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24 Until recently, this view has been represented and acutely articulated by D. Wendebourg, "Die Ekklesiologie des Konzils von Trient", in W. Reinhard/H. Schilling (ed.), *Die katholische Konfessionalisierung. Wissenschaftliches Symposium der Gesellschaft zur Herausgabe des Corpus Catholicorum und des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte 1993* (Schriften des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte 198; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus/Münster: Aschendorff, 1995) 70–87.

25 K. Ganzer, "Das Konzil von Trient und die theologische Dimension katholischer Konfessionalisierung", in Reinhard/Schilling (ed.), *Die katholische Konfessionalisierung*, 50–69.

26 Several innovative theological historical contributions may be found in G. Alberigo/I. Rogger (ed.), *Il concilio di Trento nella prospettiva del terzo millenio* (Istituto di Scienze Religiose di Trento. Religione e Cultura 19; Brescia: Morcelliana, 1997). For a newer and pithy account of Tridentine theology, see: F. Buzzi, *Il concilio di Trento (1545–1563). Breve introduzione ad alcuni temi teologici principali* (Milan: Edizioni Glossa, 1995).

27 Recently, Peter Walter has pointed out this assumedly shared foundation, which the *Tridentinum* formulated in Session 3 (4 February, 1546). This assumption had largely been overlooked until now and its implications, in the same vein, have been poorly appreciated: P.

which construed the struggle among the Thomistic, Scotist and nominalist positions on the Council, in areas such as the doctrine of Justification comprising an agonal paradigm of victory and defeat – one more readily discerns the 'consensual-integrative endeavour', which sought to include and tolerate as many diverse views as possible through open and consciously imprecise formulations.[28]

Similarly, one is today considerably more cautious regarding the judgement that strict dogmatism would have outright defeated Trent's humanistically-minded theologians and bishops.[29] Even if many of the propositions raised by the humanists did not find their way into the final documents, they were clearly palpable throughout the work. This was particularly true during the first sessions, as the subtle influence of humanistic erudition appeared, for example, in the criticism of the Vulgate as expressed in numerous Council addresses, in the image of the bishop (and also of the priest) as the preacher of the Word of God, and especially in the decree on the establishment of Scripture lectureships in cathedrals and other institutes for training the clergy.[30]

In principle, the Trent fathers are credited with demonstrating a subtle sense of expediency, so that when the theologians could not find a consensus on a particular issue, they were content to not adopt a doctrinal resolution. In consideration of this intentional self-restraint, it is argued that the Council failed to address many issues, such as the question of the *Immaculata Conceptio* of Mary or whether the bishop's ordination represents a sacrament. Other problems that had been introduced during the Reformation may have been handled in an extremely differentiated way and not in a particularly anti-Protestant sense.[31] On the one hand, for example, the Council, in its first teaching decree, rejected the Reformation adherents' principle of *sola Scriptura* and argued against an absolute separation between Scriptures and traditions. Yet, on the other hand, as Josef Rupert Geiselmann has shown,[32] the *Tridentinum* did not see the Scriptures and

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Walter, "Das Konzil von Trient als theologisches Ereignis", in P. Walter, *Syngrammata. Gesammelte Schriften zu Humanismus und Katholischer Reform*, G. Wassilowsky (ed.) (Reformationsgeschichtliche Studien und Texte. Supplementband 6; Münster: Aschendorff, 2015).

28 Cf. V. Leppin, "Spätmittelalterliche Theologie und biblische Korrektur im Rechtfertigungsdekret von Trient", in Walter/Wassilowsky (ed.), *Das Konzil von Trient*, 167–83.

29 Cf. U.G. Leinsle, "Humanismus und Thomismus auf dem Konzil von Trient", in Walter/Wassilowsky (ed.), *Das Konzil von Trient*, 125–140.

30 *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta/Dekrete der Ökumenischen Konzilien*, J. Wohlmuth (ed.) (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, ³2002), 3.667–70 (henceforth abbreviated as COD).

31 Cf. the contribution by Cardinal Kurt Koch, "Wahrnehmung und Bedeutung des Tridentinums in Theologie und ökumenischem Dialog der Gegenwart", in Walter/Wassilowsky (ed.), *Das Konzil von Trient*, 37–50.

32 J.R. Geiselmann, *Die Heilige Schrift und die Tradition. Zu den neueren Kontroversen über das*

traditions as two materially different, yet equivalent, sources of Revelation, as (later) neo-scholasticism did. Rather, Trent was based strictly on the Gospel, which was transmitted over time by "in libris scriptis et sine scripto traditionibus".[33] Indeed, Trent's decree was silent on the precise material relationship between the Scriptures and (unwritten) traditions. Similarly, there are two decrees that might well have turned out considerably more anti-Protestant: the decree on Justification, which stresses both the necessity of God's grace and the inability of human beings to attain salvation on their own, with an obvious priority to God's graceful initiative; and the decree on the sacrifice of the Mass, which centers on highlighting the uniqueness of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross.

Additional examples could also be mentioned. Yet, one should not overlook the fact that the Council fathers and theologians frequently lacked both the knowledge of and a sensitive understanding for Reformation theologies. Nor should one turn a blind eye to the fact that the Council drew up sharp dividing lines in many areas – and usually out of pure self-interest. Ultimately, against the backdrop of differentiated doctrinal statements, as has been revealed by more recent theological historical research, and of a habitus aimed to a large extent at consensus, one has become considerably more guarded in considering the *Tridentinum* as a decidedly anti-Protestant Council and as an all-out attempt at Counter-Reformation.

III.   Trent and Tridentine Catholicism: A Complex Interrelationship

Research in the past decade has also shown a much more differentiated view of the history of the reception of the Council of Trent than one could find even as recently as, the turn of the twenty-first century. Indeed, no serious contemporary historian would offer the old narrative of an uninterrupted Catholic reform success story in which the Church authorities immediately implemented the doctrinal and disciplinary decrees adopted at Trent to the letter and in cooperation with the Catholic sovereigns. Furthermore, scholars no longer argue for the establishment of a homogenous Tridentine confessional Church that had emerged all over Catholic Europe and the New World by the seventeenth century, and that openly incorporated Catholics who had become normalised in every respect regarding Creed and lifestyle. The concept of confessionalisation may at times have evoked the impression of paying homage to this idea, with its thesis that the techniques of social control practised by the spiritual and secular au-

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Verhältnis der Heiligen Schrift zu den nichtgeschriebenen Traditionen (Quaestiones disputatae 18; Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1962).
33 COD 3.663.

thorities (including those within the Catholic sphere) led to a disciplining and both a relative and absolute modernisation.[34] Finally, few would continue to maintain that the Council of Trent is to be credited – both intentionally and unintentionally – for its own considerable contribution.[35] Nevertheless, one of the original proponents of the concept of confessionalisation repeatedly stressed that the practical importance of the Council of Trent remained "rather limited", that only in the "nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did it have extensive success" and that "the concrete overhaul of the Church [was] neither the Council's nor the papacy's work but that of numerous local cells of reform and self-reform".[36]

Meanwhile, research on all fields of Church life has shown – sometimes in quite a lot of detail – that the resolutions in Trent often suffered from a massive problem of implementation. Chiefly, the long-held belief in a centrally enforced 'iron-law uniform liturgy'[37] has been shredded and replaced by an idea that presents post-Tridentine liturgical history (especially, but not exclusively, in the area of the sacraments and sacramentals described by the 1614 *Rituale Romanum*) as characterised by numerous locally organized liturgies and by liturgical reforms autonomously implemented within the local churches.[38] Similarly, art history researchers have reached the conclusion that the Catholic iconic practice of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was not marked by a notion that the images lacked 'divinity and force' (*divinitas vel virtus*) which the decree on icons aimed to inculcate.[39] By contrast, one could indeed observe an outright boom in images with miraculous powers and iconic worship after Trent.[40] Similarly, blind spots often turn up in attempts to verify whether the Council's stipulations – which were supposed to play a key role in the realisation of the entire Trent reform catalogue, such as at diocesan and provincial synods – were actually

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34 Reinhard/Schilling (ed.), *Die katholische Konfessionalisierung.*
35 W. Reinhard, "Das Konzil von Trient und die Modernisierung der Kirche. Einführung", in P. Prodi/W. Reinhard (ed.), *Das Konzil von Trient und die Moderne* (Schriften des Italienisch-Deutschen Historischen Instituts in Trient 16; Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2001) 23–42.
36 Reinhard, "Das Konzil von Trient und die Modernisierung der Kirche", 40.
37 For instance Th. Klauser, *Kleine Abendländische Liturgiegeschichte* (Bonn: Hanstein, 1944), 117.
38 Cf. B. Kranemann, "Liturgiereform nach Trient. Dynamiken eines Erneuerungsprozesses", in Walter/Wassilowsky (ed.), *Das Konzil von Trient*, 303–34.
39 COD 3.774–6.
40 Cf. Ph. Zitzlsperger, "Trient und die Kraft der Bilder. Überlegungen zur *virtus* der Gnadenbilder", in Walter/Wassilowsky (ed.), *Das Konzil von Trient*, 303–34; G. Henkel, *Rhetorik und Inszenierung des Heiligen. Eine kulturgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu barocken Gnadenbildern in Predigt und Festkultur des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Weimar: Verlag Datenbank für Geisteswissenschaften, 2004); C. Hecht, *Katholische Bildtheologie der Frühen Neuzeit. Studien zu Traktaten von Johannes Molanus, Gabriele Paleotti und anderen Autoren* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 2012).

implemented. And what of the compliance with the ban on accumulation of benefices, the precept of residence for bishops and parish priests, and, as Jedin put it, the implementation of the "Tridentine ideal of a bishop"[41], with all of the duties that are connected to the position, such as those on sermons or ministrations of the sacraments?[42]

Those who may have aimed at endeavouring to make a Tridentine guideline become a widespread ecclesiastical convention during the two and a half centuries following the conclusion of the Council often found themselves confronted by a variety of obstacles, which usually impeded or entirely blocked such intentions. Frequently, long-held traditions – such as the ancestral rights of the (cathedral) chapters or the century-long confirmed privileges of the *exempt* monasteries – prevented the enforcement of the episcopal power of jurisdiction that had been envisioned by the *Tridentinum* at all local church levels. Old liturgical customs, as well as other unique local rites relating to piety that were engrained as much among commoners as among the elite, were upheld (or reinforced) in spite of the homogenisation that went along with the Tridentine reforms. Lastly, there were structural conditions, such as the prince-bishopric constitution of the Church of the Holy Roman Empire, that could only work in a limited manner, regardless of any attempt at enforcing the new ideals of office.[43] In any case, ordinances that concerned the entire Church had to be creatively and flexibly adapted to concrete local conditions. Occasionally, desiderata emanating from Trent were simply too expensive to put into practice: if plans to set up diocesan priest seminars, for instance, were ultimately not realized, it was often because of a lack of financial means (and not only in the small dioceses in Italy) rather than a lack of will. Rome was also to some extent responsible for the non-reception of Trent. Trent's reform resolutions, for example, were foiled in Rome by a combination of the practice of dispensations, which were generously ex-

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41 Cf. C. Wiesner, "'Weide seine Lämmer'. Zu Umsetzung und Verortung der Residenzpflicht zwischen Mikropolitik und Seelenheil an der posttridentinischen Kurie", in Walter/Wassilowsky (ed.), *Das Konzil von Trient*, 221–54.

42 See H. Jedin, "Das Bischofsideal der Katholischen Reformation. Eine Studie über die Bischofsspiegel vornehmlich des 16. Jahrhunderts", in H. Jedin, *Kirche des Glaubens – Kirche der Geschichte. Ausgewählte Aufsätze und Vorträge*, vol. 2: *Konzil und Kirchenreform* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1966) 75–117; E. Gatz, "Das Bischofsideal des Konzils von Trient und der deutschsprachige Episkopat des 19. Jahrhunderts. Zum Quellenwert der Relationes status", *Römische Quartalschrift* 77 (1982) 204–28; H. Wolf, "'… ein Rohrstengel statt des Szepters verlorener Landesherrlichkeit …' Die Entstehung eines neuen Rom- bzw. Papstorientierten Bischofstyps", in R. Decot (ed.), *Kontinuität und Innovation um 1803. Säkularisation als Transformationsprozess. Kirche – Theologie – Kultur – Staat* (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte. Beiheft 65; Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2005) 109–34.

43 See B. Braun, *Princeps et episcopus. Studien zur Funktion und zum Selbstverständnis der nordwestdeutschen Fürstbischöfe nach dem Westfälischen Frieden* (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Mainz 230; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013).

ercised and financially lucrative for the papacy, little interest in allowing potentially adverse powers, such as a self-confident local Church synod, to grow, and because of a general interest in shaping Trent's reception of the newly created Roman dicasteries in the mode of a universally ecclesiastical 'Romanisation' and 'papalisation', against which the non-Roman ecclesiastical authorities defended themselves.[44]

As commendable as the attempt may be to deconstruct the old master narrative of Catholic reform's continual success story, it does not mean that the Council of Trent did not play any role whatsoever in Catholic Church history, including for the society and culture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (the post-revolutionary nineteenth century after all is generally proclaimed as the century of the belated Trent reception). Both in the older interpretations, which proceeded from the uninterrupted enforcement of the Trent decrees, and in the many newer perspectives, which almost negate any sort of reception whatsoever, there must be an insufficiently differentiated idea of how Council decisions generally evolved. Assuming that a reception did take place, the historical impact of a council event, where binding decisions are made by the entire Church, has always been marked (1) by creative appropriations, which could go as far as turning the original resolutions upside down, (2) by adaptations to regional and individual conditions, (3) by historical periods of booms and slumps regarding the way in which the event was explicitly referenced, and (4) by a discerning selection of single conciliary resolutions and statements. For instance, if some authors – in spite of the fact that seminars[45] existed virtually throughout all of France in the seventeenth century and that up until the Thirty Years' War, almost a third of all German dioceses[46] and half of all Italian bishoprics[47] possessed some such financially demanding institutions – similarly speak of "a failure of the priest seminars",[48] then a council can only experience a successful reception if its adopted norms and laws are literally and ubiquitously carried out forthwith in the shortest possible timeframe.

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44 See: G. Wassilowsky, "Posttridentinische Reform und päpstliche Zentralisierung. Zur Rolle der Konzilskongregation", in A. Merkt/G. Wassilowsky/G. Wurst (ed.), *Reformen in der Kirche. Historische Perspektiven* (Quaestiones Disputatae 260; Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 2014) 138–57.

45 J. Bergin, *Church, Society and Religious Change in France, 1580–1730* (New Haven, CT/London: Yale University Press, 2009).

46 E. Gatz (ed.), *Priesterausbildungsstätten der deutschsprachigen Länder zwischen Aufklärung und Zweitem Vatikanischen Konzil* (Römische Quartalschrift. Supplementheft 49; Rome: Herder, 1994).

47 M. Sangalli (ed.), *Chiese chierici sacerdoti. Clero e seminari in Italia tra XVI e XX secolo* (Rome: Herder, 2000).

48 P. Hersche, *Muße und Verschwendung. Europäische Gesellschaft und Kultur im Barockzeitalter* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 2006), 2.177.

The same could be said about the assessment of the impact of other reform desiderata. On the one hand, the Church of the Early Modern Period never set up any comprehensive control apparatus, such as what might have been requested during the post-conciliary establishment of surveillance institutions, like those of the episcopal and apostolic visitations or the Apostolic Nunciature.[49] On the other hand, however, can one truly assume that these new bodies would have had no effect at all on Catholics and their clerics? Might they not, for example, have at least developed elaborate strategies in order to mask their own resistant attitude or to legitimise it by posing good arguments? Furthermore, no one today would want to claim that the numerous bishops of post-Tridentine local churches would have changed overnight due to top-down actions centrally steered by Rome. This was clearly impossible if one only takes into account the quite varied local procedures of elevating those to the rank of bishop. And yet a 'shift in emphasis' might be ascertained in the composition of the upper clergy, which might be traced back to an incremental 'theologisation' or 'Romanisation' of their educational paths.[50] In any case, there was the prospect of a profile of requirements, characterised by a reduction of functions and a concentration on pastoral duties, which the ecclesiastical officeholders of all hierarchical levels could not entirely shirk off in the long run. Thus, in this respect, the list of examples – in which subtle and gradual changes in Catholicism that followed Trent may clearly be traced back to the Council – could easily be extended.

Thus, there remain two important tasks for the researchers of Early Modern Catholicism: first, to try to discover the history of the more subtle effects of the Council of Trent beyond the simplistic narratives of complete success or failure; and, secondly, to determine, at least to some extent, the role of the *Tridentinum* in the establishment of the Catholic confessional Church and in the formation of a specific Catholic confessional culture. Given the understanding of the history of Early Modern Catholicism as more than a mere "extension of the Middle Ages by another two hundred years", as Benno Hubensteiner has argued,[51] and that if one should desire to factor in the enormous flows of an enhanced dynamism – regardless of the extent to which they went along with forms of piety and institutions that primarily stemmed from the Middle Ages – then he or she must explain and endeavour to comprehend those factors that initiated the transformative process that led to a non-Reformation form of confessional Christianity. Is this dynamics of transformation from the medieval Church to 'Ca-

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49 See: H. Jedin, "Nuntiaturberichte und Durchführung des Konzils von Trient", *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 53 (1973) 180–213.

50 Cf. R. Becker, "Posttridentinische Bischofserhebungen", in Walter/Wassilowsky (ed.), *Das Konzil von Trient*, 275–300.

51 B. Hubensteiner, *Vom Geist des Barock. Kultur und Frömmigkeit im alten Bayern* (Munich: Süddeutscher Verlag, 1978), 21.

tholicism' due at least in part to the *Tridentinum?* And if so, to what extent? Is it sufficient in this context, as it has previously been, to search exclusively for the implementation of individual resolutions contained within the final published documents? Or must one include in the analysis a comprehensive account of the impact of the entire Council event and of its constructed interpretations by a variety of protagonists who held diverse interests? In other words, would one not have to incorporate the mythologisation of Trent?

IV.   Trent and Baroque Catholicism

Peter Hersche, in his impressive study *Muße und Verschwendung* (*Leisure and Waste*), replied with unequivocal negativity as to the importance of Trent for Catholicism between 1600 and 1750. According to Hersche, there was only a very short and hectic period of reform directly following the Council's conclusion, during the reign of the so-called Reform Popes. This, however, had ceased by the end of the sixteenth century at the latest. Thereafter, according to Hersche, the long Baroque era began and lasted up until the Enlightenment, with its specific feature (*proprium*), as Hersche – in the tradition of Hubensteiner – sees it as being the continuation of a late medieval religiosity and of a non-Protestant and non-modern mentality of conspicuous waste and preference for leisure. Hersche distinguishes Baroque outright as a contraposition to Trent and he understands it as a staunch countermovement to the discipline and stringency which he attributed to Trent. Yet, Hersche's characterisation of Baroque Catholicism actually has nothing to do with Trent. Rather, it is the backlash to Trent, which the majority of contemporary Catholics would have also assumed.

A prerequisite to such a view of the early modern history of Catholicism once again reflects a particular image of Trent, which in Hersche's case is at odds with what has been initially identified as the typical and still popular Protestant notion. Since Trent, according to Hersche, stands for "straightening out, reviewing, limiting and regulating" and for a "rejection of traditional popular devoutness" (*Volksfrömmigkeit*),[52] it is therefore understood as downright Reformation-oriented, and even enlightened. However, this image does not quite correspond to the abovementioned emphasis of the newer research on Trent, which doubts the unanimity and cohesion of the Reform program, as well as its doctrinal teachings. Most recent work stresses that many of Trent's resolutions aimed at purging late medieval piety, as well as eliminating certain abuses and curtailing excesses, in order to both limit potential future targets of Protestant criticism and to take up

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52 Cf. P. Hersche, "Wie modern ist der Barockkatholizismus?", in Walter/Wassilowsky (ed.), *Das Konzil von Trient*, 487–518.

desiderata that had been expressed during the late medieval councils and synods, as well as by the late medieval reform movements, long before the Reformation. Yet, this purging and 'self-disciplining' feature is only one side of the coin. At the same time, Trent defended and maintained the Middle Ages: its reforms and innovations are genuinely "conservative".[53] The decree on the veneration of saints and images could perhaps be a good example of how the *Tridentinum* safeguarded, in principle, the right of the continued existence of old forms of piety, while it simultaneously aimed at clarifying precisely these forms of piety according to a certain theology. However, if one considers how this decree was drafted – in a last minute effort, without much debate and at the instigation of the French delegation, who were traumatised by Calvinist iconoclasm[54] – one would not wish to cite this text in order to determine an all-embracing Tridentine habitus in its entirety.

On principle, both the reform decrees and the doctrinal resolutions ought to be considered when probing the correlation between Trent and Baroque Catholicism. In particular, direct lines of explanation may well be drawn between the conciliary theology of the sacrament (and especially the theology of the Eucharist) and the post-Council praxis of the sacraments. It is true that all of these forms of piety stem from the Middle Ages, but they pass through a series of essential changes during and after the *Tridentinum*. I have endeavoured to demonstrate this transformative process by taking the concept of representation which the Council newly profiled in the debate on the theology of the sacrifice of the Mass and which subsequently, in my opinion, would become fundamentally important for Catholic confessional culture as a whole, as an example.[55] In order to unequivocally differentiate the concept of 'representation' from that of 'memoria' during the Council debates, the former became ever more stringently restricted to human action. Contrary to the idea of inner mimesis, which the Protestants more or less accept as the sole locus of the presence of God, the representation of the Eucharist now became a human activity, viz. the praxis, action, or bloodless, but sensibly discernible, re-enactment of Christ's sacrifice. Since Jesus's sacrifice on the Cross signifies an animated action, the representation of the sacrifice must also be a visually imitative action that symbolizes His Passion. In both the public re-enactment and the physical performance,

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53 W. Reinhard, "Was ist katholische Konfessionalisierung?", in Reinhard/Schilling (ed.), *Die katholische Konfessionalisierung*, 419–55, on p. 450.

54 H. Jedin, "Entstehung und Tragweite des Trienter Dekrets über die Bildverehrung", in Jedin, *Kirche des Glaubens – Kirche der Geschichte*, 2.460–98.

55 G. Wassilowsky, "'Wo die Messe fellet, so ligt das Bapstum'. Zur Kultur päpstlicher Repräsentation in der Frühen Neuzeit", in B. Emich/Ch. Wieland (ed.), *Kulturgeschichte des frühneuzeitlichen Papsttums* (Zeitschrift für historische Forschung. Beiheft 48; Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2013) 219–47.

Christ's sacrifice becomes an objectively real presence, which the recipient may subjectively internalise a second time. With this restriction of the concept of representation to dynamic human praxis, the *Tridentinum* laid the basis for post-Tridentine Catholicism to become a genuine religion of action (*Handlungsreligion*). For the development of the entire Catholic culture of representation, the importance of this 'action-theoretical' focus of the conception of representation can hardly be overstated. On the one hand, it led to the strengthening of those who perform the representing actions, that is, to the Old Church, with office bearers who were capable of effective action. On the other hand, it led to a 'theatricalisation' of all religious spheres of life, which would become a defining characteristic of Catholic Baroque culture, with symbolic events ranging from church spaces to dramatic sermons, and from processions to the ceremonial enactment of canonisations and heretic abjurations. This theatricalisation represented a form of intensification, of additional dynamism, and of dramatisation of external religious actions, which in Trent were credited with being capable of rendering the signified real present and in so doing affect the internal world of the perceiving subject. With its theatrical performances, the Catholic Church of the Early Modern Period systematically erected spaces of experience in which outward transformation was shown and inner transformation was accomplished – and these spaces of experience are, after all, quite typical for post-Tridentine Baroque Catholicism.

I still consider it beneficial to further explore the lines between Tridentine theology and post-Tridentine piety, which have never followed a straight course and did not continue without several interruptions.[56] By doing so, one cannot return to the old contention of Baroque as a form of art – or piety – of the Counter-Reformation.[57] Just as Trent had hardly been a pure act of Counter-Reformation, the Counter-Reformation went far beyond Baroque Catholicism!

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56 Simon Ditchfield also pursues the question "How Tridentine was the early modern globalizing Roman Catholicism?" as regards the development of Catholicism becoming the "first world religion", cf. S. Ditchfield, "Tridentine Catholicism", in A. Bamji/G.H. Janssen/M. Laven (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation* (Farnham/Burlington: Ashgate, 2013) 15–31. Likewise, recent presentations by Prosperi and Prodi are large-scale attempts to demonstrate the correlation between the Council and the post-Tridentine Church: A. Prosperi, *Il Concilio di Trento: una introduzione storica* (Turin: Einaudi, 2001); P. Prodi, *Il paradigma tridentino. Un'epoca della storia della Chiesa* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2010). A similar concern may be found in the chapters of C. Mozzarelli/D. Zardin (ed.), *I tempi del concilio. Religione, cultura e società nell'Europa tridentina* (Biblioteca del Cinquecento 79; Rome: Bulzoni, 1997).

57 Cf. W. Weisbach, *Der Barock als Kunst der Gegenreformation* (Berlin: Cassierer, 1921).

V.   The Historical Impact of the Myth of Trent

Another level of Trent's impact which, though it has been addressed several times in historiography, has so far received little attention, is the history of the reference to Trent. This does not mean how one measures the importance of Trent, i.e. to what extent single resolutions written up in Trent's decrees were in fact implemented within the post-conciliary Church. Instead, the question is to what extent this Council represented a reference point in the process of shaping modern Catholicism, regardless of whether this reference was backed up by what was literally expressed in the resolutions. Perhaps the Council's most important contribution lies in the fact – which was on no account to be taken for granted – that it took place at all. The mere fact that the Council met at all might have re-established a stable foundation for the Old Church, which was shaken to its very core by the Reformation. All groups of protagonists of this old Creed could then relate to it respectively in their own diverse ways. From this perspective, the importance of the *Tridentinum* would rest primarily on the fact that it helped the Old Church gain new self-confidence. Whereas the Protestants established their confession by cultivating the memory of either Luther or one of the other protagonists of the Reformation, the Catholics now had the Council, by which they could reassure themselves and to which they could refer to in every possible endeavour. However, since the reality of the historical Council was much too contradictory and complex, there was a need for something like a simple 'Fundamental Trent Formula' (*Grundformel Trient*), viz. a 'Myth of Trent' that would reduce its complexities, a story which both fulfilled the function of a basic foundation myth and could be called upon to legitimise the most varied of purposes. John W. O'Malley has frequently pointed out the myths that continue to circulate about the *Tridentinum*. However, this American professor of Church history has set his focus primarily on exposing these popular stereotypes as "misunderstandings" and "misinformation".[58] One task of the historian's craft is to deconstruct historical myths and to probe their equivalences according to historical reality, while another is to engage in reconstructing exactly how these myths originated and the extent of their historical impact. Wolfgang Reinhard investigates this interpretation by considering the "invented Council of Trent" as more decisive than the "true Council of Trent" and by speaking of Trent as a "myth of self-reassurance".[59] Nevertheless we are almost entirely at the earliest

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58 J.W. O'Malley, "The Council of Trent: Myths, Misunderstandings, and Misinformation", in Th.M. Lucas (ed.), *Spirit – Style – Story: Essays Honoring John W. Padberg, S.J.* (Chicago, IL: Loyola Press, 2002) 205–26. Cf. also: J.W. O'Malley, *Trent: What Happened at the Council* (Cambridge, MA/London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013), 11–22.
59 Reinhard, "Das Konzil von Trient und die Modernisierung der Kirche", 41.

stages of research with regards to how and for what purpose various segments and levels of Church life employed this 'invented' Trent.

It was presumably the Roman Curia that, in its newly created *dicasteries*, first understood that one could not create a powerful momentum (that is, not establish a confessional Church) out of the true *Tridentinum*. Precisely for this reason – and contrary to the original intentions of Pius IV to publish all of the Council's acts – it kept Trent's documents under lock and key in the treasury for centuries and preferred to make use of its own spun-out myth of Trent in order to realise its intentional and universal 'Romanisation project'.

It was only a few months after Trent's conclusion that the papacy, by establishing the Sacred Congregation of the Council, assumed the interpretation and realisation of the *Tridentinum*. The Pope intended right from the start – by confirming the decrees and simultaneously claiming an absolute monopoly on interpretations – to keep the reception of the Council under Rome's control. Indeed, for him, the most important matter to exclude was that any demands for reform that referred to Trent would be made towards Rome from outside, something Giovanni Morone and the papalists managed to prevent during the Council. *Benedictus Deus*, the Papal bull of confirmation, made it clear that the Pope was not subordinate to, but stood above, Council decrees, a status of superiority institutionalized by the papacy with the foundation of the Sacred Congregation of the Council.[60]

The research community has finally acknowledged the importance of this *dicastery* for Trent's reception.[61] I would therefore at least like to outline some of the consequences of the establishment of a central office that had specific competences for the post-Tridentine reform process and the broader structure of the post-Tridentine Church. The Tridentine reform decrees, for example, were either confirmed or announced as law in the territories of the bishops of the Holy Roman Empire and of France with much hesitancy – and sometimes not at all. There are certainly different reasons for this.[62] However, the question arises as to whether the papacy is not largely responsible for the refusal of the formal introduction of the *Tridentinum* by local churches, exactly because of the fact that the authentic interpretation was the sole responsibility of the Pope, as de-

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60 Cf. the bull in H. Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, P. Hünermann (ed.) (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, ³⁷1991), 582–4.
61 Cf. the project at the *Max-Planck-Institut für Europäische Rechtsgeschichte* (Frankfurt). Likewise Christian Wiesner's chapter "Die Rezeption des Tridentinums durch die Konzils-kongregation am Beispiel der Residenzpflicht", which is also in this volume. Finally, see my own attempt: G. Wassilowsky, "Posttridentinische Reform und päpstliche Zentralisierung".
62 See H. Molitor, "Die untridentinische Reform. Anfänge katholischer Erneuerung in der Reichskirche", in W. Brandmüller *et al.* (ed.), *Ecclesia militans. Studien zur Konzilien- und Reformationsgeschichte* (FS R. Bäumer; Paderborn: Schöningh, 1988) 1.399–431.

termined in the confirmation bull? Whoever accepted the disciplinary law of the *Tridentinum* after 1564 was simultaneously obliged to turn to Rome in cases where the application was uncertain, as well as constantly subject to Rome's judgment. The German bishops were likely to have foreseen the danger in relinquishing their legal autonomy. However, their refusal to formally accept this law must not be interpreted in every case as hostility towards Trent or even as a fundamental unwillingness towards reform. Rather, they distanced themselves from Rome's intended 'monarchialisation' of the Church and from a papal idea of reform. In future research, historians will have to more precisely differentiate between episcopal and papal programs of the reception of Trent.

A similar shift towards papal centralisation occurred regarding the post-Tridentine synodal constitution. The Fathers of the *Tridentinum* had hoped that the reanimation of the synods would have an enormous impact on the realisation of Tridentine reform for the entire Church and on a new self-actualisation of the episcopal office.[63] However, from 1588, no provincial synod was allowed to announce a resolution without it first being approved by the Sacred Congregation of the Council. For this reason – maintaining the control of the Synod Institute – Rome itself was partly responsible for the fact that in most local European churches, the post-Tridentine synod did not develop into the forceful and autonomous legislative and judiciary reform instrument that the Council had envisaged.

A further enlightening phenomenon is the apostolic visitators appointed by Rome who, after the *Tridentinum*, were embedded in virtually every Italian diocese in order to ensure that the bishops' undertakings followed Rome's views.[64] In a structural sense, this instrument also led to a weakening of episcopal power in the context of the Council's reception: the visitators sent by Rome were stern 'bad guys' whose job it was to both rigorously demand adherence to Tridentine norms and to intimidate the bishops at the local level. Quite often, the bishops opposed these inflexible visitators and made written representation against them at the Congregation in Rome. The Cardinals, in turn, played the role of the 'good guys' by demonstrating flexibility, relaxing the constraints imposed by their visitators and conceding deviations from the Tridentine norm to the bishops *en masse*. What this achieved was the simple fact *that* the bishops made representations in Rome. This led to the paradoxical situation that the episcopal resistance, which was expressed as an appeal to Rome, eventually strengthened anew the decision-making power of the Curia, in line with the maxim: should you

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63 Cf. COD 3.761.
64 See G. Romeo, "La congregazione dei vescovi e i visitatori apostolici nell'Italia post-tridentina: Un primo bilancio", in M. Sangalli (ed.), *Per il Cinquecento religioso italiano. Clero, cultura, società* (Rome: Edizione dell'Ateneo, 2003) 2.607–14.

wish to preserve the post-Tridentine *status quo ante*, it first has to be approved by Rome.

Distancing myself from Hubert Jedin,[65] I would like to make the case that the post-Tridentine papacy massively violated the order that was in fact created by the *Tridentinum*. This occurred because the Tridentine ideal of a bishop was systematically eroded by the practice of the instruments that were supposed to implement the Tridentine reforms, which were newly created by the papacy after the Council. Trent did not envisage ongoing congregations, apostolic visitations, *ad limina* inspection visits, or permanent nunciatures.

Furthermore, I would like to present the hypothesis that the post-Tridentine papacy was more interested in the permanent assertion of its own decision-making powers and the symbolic representation of papal sovereignty than in the realisation of Tridentine reform. Indeed, precisely by its appropriation and in-strumentalisation of the Council, the papacy actively and significantly con-tributed to a general alienation from Trent and its inadequate reception. In any case, one history still needs to be written – of Rome's centralisation in the wake of the 'myth of Trent' and the papacy's functional self-seeking in its context (as well as a history of the simultaneous antagonistic refusal of this centralisation in the periphery). Perhaps it might be helpful in this context (in same way that we usually differentiate 'Thomasian' from 'Thomist') to distinguish terminologi-cally in the future between 'Trentian' (that is, what the 'real' Council represented and wanted) and 'Tridentine' (that is, what actually ensued from it).

VI.   From Catholic Confessionalisation to Catholic Confessional Culture

Over the past thirty years, German-speaking historians have detailed the 'ne-cessity of clarity' (*Zwang zur Eindeutigkeit*), the battle against ambiguity and irenic positions, and the elimination of doctrinal openness in the process of confessionalisation. Mostly, they have been concerned with the processes of reciprocal demarcation and internal homogenisation of the confessional churches that took place in conjunction with territorial state-building. The ne-cessity to establish distinctions and to demand conformity is certainly an es-sential and crucial aspect of the confessional age.

According to recent research, the Council of Trent failed to lay the founda-tions for this, either with a cohesive theology or with a coherent reform program. These foundations had to be created after the Council through its mytholog-

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65 H. Jedin, "Papst und Konzil. Ihre Beziehung vor, auf und nach dem Trienter Konzil", in H. Jedin, *Kirche des Glaubens – Kirche der Geschichte*, 2.429–40, on p. 440.

isation. But orthodoxy produced heterodoxy, and the centralisation aimed for by Rome generated forces of resistance at the periphery. This is why future German research will more thoroughly play down the degree of success of confessionalisation and pay more attention to the internal pluralities of Catholicism and the osmosis between the confessions.

To this end, it seems promising to pursue cultural categories to a greater extent. Confessional identity should not be regarded as a fixed category in any essentialist way, as it was likely one which was founded at a council and then became permanently fixed. Confessionality should rather be seen as a constantly swaying and unstable cultural practice. Since confessionality in a concrete situation always has to be created afresh in a performative way, it would make more sense to speak – as Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger has suggested – of "situational confessionality" (situative Konfessionalität).[66]

Yet, even if one's confessional identity must always be concretised in newly changing patterns, it only makes sense to speak of confessionality if, within a plurality of human life manifestations, a series of specific identity-constituting qualities may also be identified. Without distinct fundamental characteristics (propria), the concept of confession is empty and senseless. As stark as diversities within a confession may be – in terms of regional ways of life (Lebenswelt) and theological-spiritual dimensions – there must still be a set of certain and more comprehensive characteristics that make a religious group recognizable as a confession.

In order to be able to equally account for this distinct feature as regards both the confessional dimension, and the great variety of contextual and ephemeral ways of confessional life, it would be favourable to combine the narrow term 'confession' with the broad definition of culture into a single concept: "confessional culture". Thomas Kaufmann first used this concept for describing the Lutheran perspective.[67] Since then, others have also spoken of a "Catholic con-

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66 B. Stollberg-Rilinger, "Einleitung", in A. Pietsch/B. Stollberg-Rilinger (ed.), Konfessionelle Ambiguität. Uneindeutigkeit und Verstellung als religiöse Praxis in der Frühen Neuzeit (Schriften des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte 214; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2013) 9–26, on p. 14.

67 The most instructive reflections on the term and concept 'confessional culture' may be found in Th. Kaufmann, Konfession und Kultur. Lutherischer Protestantismus in der zweiten Hälfte des Reformationsjahrhunderts (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 7–21; cf. also Th. Kaufmann, "Einleitung: Transkonfessionalität, Interkonfessionalität, binnenkonfessionelle Pluralität – Neue Forschungen zur Konfessionalisierungsthese", in K. von Greyerz/M. Jakubowski-Tiessen/Th. Kaufmann (ed.), Interkonfessionalität – Transkonfessionalität – binnenkonfessionelle Pluralität. Neue Forschungen zur Konfessionalisierungsthese (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2003) 9–15; Th. Kaufmann/A. Schubert/K. von Greyerz (ed.), Frühneuzeitliche Konfessionskulturen (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2008); V. Leppin/U.A. Wien (ed.), Konfessionsbildung und Konfessionskultur in Siebenbürgen in der Frühen Neuzeit (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2005).

fessional culture".[68] The concept of 'confessional culture' might supplant the paradigm of confessionalisation without having to omit from consideration the fundamental and valid insights of confessionalisation research (such as the techniques of social control that aim at standardizing and homogenizing the religion, used in all confessions by ecclesiastical and secular authorities in a structurally analogous way). Within the concept of 'confessional culture', the Council of Trent would no longer appear as a mere factor in the process of social disciplining. Rather, in such a confessional cultural perspective, one could discern how variably the *Tridentinum* was appropriated, reframed and implemented in different regions and according to diverse levels of action, and, more particularly, how much the 'myth of Trent' represented an orientating and stabilising reference point for the formation of the distinctive practices of the thinking, interpreting and behaving of early modern Catholics. Because what would the history of religion be without myths!

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[68] The term "Catholic confessional culture" appears early, in A. Holzem, "Katholische Konfessionskultur im Westfalen der Frühen Neuzeit. Glaubenswissen und Glaubenspraxis in agrarischen Lebens- und Erfahrungsräumen", *Westfälische Forschungen: Zeitschrift des Westfälischen Instituts für Regionalgeschichte des Landschaftsverbandes Westfalen-Lippe* 56 (2006) 65–87; G. Wassilowsky, "Katholizismus", *Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit* 6 (2007) 467–73; Th. Maissen, "Konfessionskulturen in der frühneuzeitlichen Eidgenossenschaft. Eine Einführung", *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Religions- und Kulturgeschichte* 101 (2007) 225–46.

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