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A Critical Comparison of the Ecclesiologies of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith.

Chapter One
Introduction

Churchianity is a modern term that was coined by someone¹ to deride, so it seems, Christianity that is church-centred - Christianity that functions in- and from within the structures of what is popularly called the institutionalised church. One context in which the term is used² sets “churchianity”³ against a more Kingdom-focused Christianity. It does so by pointing out that Jesus used the word “church” only three times in the Gospels, whereas He used the word “kingdom” far more often. From this statistic the deduction is made that Jesus considered the kingdom of God far more important than the church of God. To be sure, we may “...take as our starting point the fact that what Jesus’ message immediately announced was not the church but the kingdom of God...” (Ratzinger⁴ 1996:20), and we may safely acknowledge that this can be demonstrated statistically. In the same way we may understand the dictum of Loisy,⁵ that “Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom; what came was the Church” (Ratzinger 1996:20). But then, it is equally true that “...a historical reading of the texts (of the New Testament) reveals that the opposition of kingdom and church has no factual basis” (Ratzinger, 1996:21). Indeed, setting aside the non-sequitur inherent in attributing undue significance to the mere frequency of use of a particular term in Scripture⁶, it is important to note that one of the instances where Jesus did use the word “church” he did so in a context that clearly indicates the importance of the church in his thinking. It does so in a way unmatched by any statement Jesus ever made about the kingdom. In Matthew 16:18 he says, “...I will build my *church* (emphasis added) and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”⁷. If Jesus has been keeping his promise, he has been building his church and

¹ The origin of the term could not be traced, but it seems to be used with increasing frequency especially on “emerging church” Internet weblogs and sites (see footnote 2 for an example).

² Reg Codrington on [http://www.Reg_Codrington\Developing_Kingdom_Vision_\(by_Reg_Codrington\)_»_Regeneration@FutureChurch.mht](http://www.Reg_Codrington\Developing_Kingdom_Vision_(by_Reg_Codrington)_»_Regeneration@FutureChurch.mht) accessed 22nd June 2007.

³ The use of such a phrase as “churchianity” in a discussion such as this seems to indicate at least a measure of *ad hominem* intent.

⁴ It is by now a widely known fact that Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger is now Pope Benedict XVI. To facilitate access to sources for the reader, and for the sake of consistency, the name “Ratzinger” is used throughout in connection with those works that were written by Cardinal Ratzinger before he became Pope, and his papal name is used for all works produced by him after he became Pope.

⁵ A remark in Cardinal Ratzinger’s footnote to this comment is important: “...(T)he maxim was linked with an interpretation that found no support even in Loisy’s original meaning” (1996:21).

⁶ “Weighing” the significance of any particular scriptural term in each context in which it occurs, rather than coldly counting its frequency of occurrence, seems a sounder hermeneutical principle.

⁷ Although there is no similar statement from Jesus that He will build His Kingdom and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, this does not necessarily indicate lesser importance of the Kingdom in Jesus’ thinking.

is still building his church. The question, is “what has Jesus been building and what is He building?” This question has been answered in diverse ways.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*⁸ (882) affirms that:

The *Pope*, Bishop of Rome and Peter’s successor is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and the whole company of the faithful. For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered.

The *1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*⁹ is the standard confession of faith of Reformed (or “Calvinistic”, or “Particular”¹⁰) Baptist churches across the world. Chapter 26, paragraph 4 of this Confession states the following:

The Lord Jesus Christ is the head of His church. By the appointment of the Father, all authority requisite for the calling, establishment, ordering and governing of the church is supremely and sovereignly invested in Him. It is impossible for the Pope of Rome in any true sense to be the head of the church, for he is the antichrist¹¹, described in Scripture, as ‘the man of sin’, ‘the son of perdition’ who ‘exalts himself’ in the church against Christ and ‘above all that is called God’, whom ‘the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of His coming’.

It is immediately clear that the above two paragraphs present two diametrically opposed views of the church. At the same time, there is considerable agreement between these two ecclesiologies.

In line with their ecclesiology, Reformed Baptist churches, as a firm rule, do not unite in denominations. The case is no different in South Africa. The only visible association of Reformed Baptist churches in South Africa¹² is a recently established¹³, rather small, hardly growing, if not already declining voluntary association called *Sola 5* (named after the five so-called “solas” of the Reformation, namely *sola fide*, *sola gracia*, *solus Christus*, *sola scriptura* and *solus Deo gloria*.). *Sola 5* describes itself as “an association of God-centered evangelicals in Southern Africa”¹⁴. Not every Reformed Baptist¹⁵ church in South Africa is associated with *Sola 5*. Although the *1689 BCF* remains the

⁸ In the rest of this thesis, reference to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* will be abbreviated *CCC*.

⁹ To be abbreviated *1689 BCF* in the rest of this thesis.

¹⁰ Called thus for their affirmation of *particular atonement* in their soteriology (the view that Christ died for the elect only and in *particular*).

¹¹ In this statement, as in many others, the *1689 BCF* follows the Westminster Confession of Faith.

¹² It is in fact a Southern African fraternity.

¹³ *Sola 5* was formally established in September 2005 in Pretoria.

¹⁴ *Sola 5*. The *Sola 5 Handbook*. Sonlandpark: *Sola 5*, 2006.

¹⁵ The term “*Reformed Baptist church*” describes a church that holds to the *1689 Baptist Confession of Faith* as its official confession of faith.

official confession of faith of a number of its associated churches, *Sola 5* has formulated a new Confession of Faith, which differs from the *1689 BCF* only marginally. What is significant in the context of this study is that the most important difference between the *1689 BCF* and the new *Sola 5* Confession is the latter's exclusion of paragraph 4 of chapter 26 of the *1689 BCF* (quoted above). On the face of it, this may have removed a major stumbling block to dialogue between Catholics and Reformed Baptists in South Africa.¹⁶ Critical comparison of the *1689 BCF* and the *CCC* with one another can only facilitate the efforts of those sincerely inclined towards removal of obstacles to dialogue and create a better and hopefully wider and firmer platform for such dialogue. Critical analysis alongside one another of the ecclesiologies of the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF* and the historical background to each could facilitate dialogue between Catholics and Reformed Baptists. That is, if such dialogue is at all possible. In the interest of Christian truth and unity it is important, if possible, that Catholics and Reformed Baptists utilize what ecclesiological common ground they may share, to identify, recognize and discuss their seemingly irreconcilable ecclesiological differences. Very little, if any work, it seems, has been done in this regard. This research seeks to make a contribution towards filling that gap.

This thesis attempts to answer the following questions: What are the implications of the differences and similarities between the ways in which Catholics and Reformed Baptists understand the concept "church" and the church's constitution and characteristics, and can a critical evaluation of the agreements and differences in any way facilitate ecumenical dialogue between Roman Catholics and Reformed Baptists?¹⁷

An important area of commonality between Catholics and Reformed Baptists is that both have a high view of the church. The high view that Catholics hold of the church is well known. Not so well known is that Reformed Baptists also hold a very high view of the church of Jesus Christ. In the words of Reformed Baptist Samuel Waldron (2004:27), "Beware of minimizing the importance of the church of Jesus Christ." Despite this shared high view of the church there remain, of course, vast ecclesiological differences between the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF*. This thesis proceeds from the point of

¹⁶ Yet only on the face of it, as will be shown in Chapter 4 of this paper.

¹⁷ This thesis does not merely contrast in column-like format the very obvious differences and resemblances between the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF*. Except where required in particular instances, this thesis does not with particular intent touch upon differences and agreements between Catholics and Reformed Baptists in other areas (such as e.g. theology proper, soteriology and liturgy).

departure that although there are important similarities between the ecclesiologies of the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF*, the differences, particularly from a Reformed Baptist point of view, seem important enough to strike a deep and wide divide between Catholics and Reformed Baptists. A critical evaluation of such statements as those quoted above may contribute towards the crossing of the divide between Roman Catholics and Reformed Baptists that such statements create when they are made uncritically.

This thesis is, then, a critical comparison of the ecclesiologies of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (Paragraphs 748-975 and 2030-2051) and the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith (Chapter 26)¹⁸, and the theological framework underlying each. The comparison is done in order to determine and describe the theological differences and agreements between the way Roman Catholics and Reformed (Calvinistic, or “Particular¹⁹”) Baptists, respectively, understand the concept “church”; the constitution of the church and the characteristics of the church.

It must be kept in mind, when comparisons are made between the *CCC* and *1689 BCF*, that the *CCC* is, as it was intended to be, a comprehensive statement of the Catholic Faith, from its entire history into its foreseeable future, whilst the *1689 BCF* is not, and was never intended to be a comprehensive statement of the Reformed Baptist Faith. Rather, as is described later on, the *1689 BCF* was intended to distinguish the Particular Baptists from the General Baptists in seventeenth century England, as well as from other groups that they wished not to be associated with, and to indicate their orthodox Protestantism in fellowship with other Reformed Protestants. As such, in that sense, at least, the *1689 BCF* is a polemical document.

The chapter division is as follows: Chapter 1 consists of the introduction. Chapter 2 contains the historical background of the *CCC* and of the *1689 BCF*, respectively.

Because the theological framework of the *1689 BCF* is *Sola Scriptura* whilst that of the *CCC* is Scripture and the Tradition of the church²⁰ (which includes the church Fathers,

¹⁸ A problem is presented by the fact that the thesis compares two documents from different eras: one from the seventeenth century with one from the twentieth century. Somewhat ironically, it is the Catholic document that dates from the twentieth century. This difference of historical contexts and the problems involved with that is kept firmly in mind throughout.

¹⁹ “Reformed Baptists” form a fraternity within the broader Baptist fraternity, holding in common with other Baptists what may be termed “Baptist Principles”, yet distinguished from other Baptists by their particularly *Calvinistic* soteriology and ecclesiology. Generally, Reformed Baptists (by own choice) are not included in ecumenical dialogue between Baptists and Roman Catholics.

²⁰ It is, of course not entirely accurate to put it like this, for the fact is that Scripture is seen in the Roman Catholic Church as, in an important sense, *part* of the Tradition of the church, and rightly so. Nevertheless, the popular

the Liturgy and the Magisterium of the church), chapter 3 discusses how the differences between these two frameworks effect the most striking differences between the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF*, especially with regard to liturgy.

Chapter 4 examines the resemblances and differences between how the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF*, respectively, understand the concept “church” and what this term designates in Christian usage. A discussion of the constitutive elements and structural functioning of the church, including authority in the church and the proper form of church government according to the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF* respectively, follows this.

Chapter 5 deals with the characteristics, or attributes, of the church. This examines the unity, sanctity, catholicity and apostolicity of the church.

Chapter 6, the concluding chapter, draws out some important implications of the agreements and differences between the ecclesiologies of the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF* with special reference to how these might impact on possible ecumenical endeavours between Reformed Baptists and Roman Catholics in a South African context.

description of the distinction between the respective theological frameworks of Catholicism and Protestantism as *Sola Scriptura* as opposed to *Scriptura et Traditiones Ecclesiae* seems harmless enough, if not useful, for the purposes of this thesis.

Chapter Two
The Historical Backgrounds of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith

This chapter sketches the historical seedbeds of the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF*, respectively. The *CCC* is treated first. The chapter begins from Pope John Paul II's presentation of the *CCC* to the church, and then returns to the beginning of the process that lead up to that event in order to trace from there the important steps in that process. These steps are: the proposal for the *CCC*; the process behind its production; the purposes of the *CCC* and the ultimate product itself.

The second part of the chapter sets the *1689 BCF* in its historical context as a document of a particular strand of the Baptist tradition, namely the Particular (or "Reformed", or "Calvinistic") Baptists.

2.1 The Historical Background of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

On the 10th of December 1992 in the Vatican Palace, to the enthralling sound of a Palestrina Mass in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Pope John Paul II presented to the world the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The seamlessness of Palestrina's phrases breathed an apt atmosphere into the occasion, for the *Catechism* has a seamlessness of its own. As phrase is interwoven with phrase in the Palestrina, so doctrine is interwoven with doctrine in the *Catechism*. Thus the occasion provided a splendid sending forth, for the sustenance of the church, of the fruit of six years of diligent work on the part of a commission of twelve bishops and cardinals "...representing the most important curial offices involved in the project, as well as the great cultural spheres of the Catholic Church" (Ratzinger 1994:14).

Neither catechisms²¹, in one form or another, nor the practice of catechesis were new to the Catholic Church²² at the time the *CCC* appeared. There comes to mind several local (or national) catechisms that have from time to time appeared in the history of the Roman Catholic Church, for example the Catechism of Peter Carisius, used in Germany

²¹ Reverend John Pollard (2007), former staff and present consultant of the United States Bishops' Committee on the Catechism, gives a very useful definition of "catechism" when he says that "(a) catechism is a text which contains the fundamental Christian truths formulated in a way that facilitates their understanding".

²² The term "catechism" as such was first used in 1357 when the Archbishop of York published the "Lay Folks Catechism" (According to the website of the U.S. Catholic Bishops Conference. <http://www.usccb.org/catechism/general/dossier.htm#historywww>. Accessed 6th Sept. 2007). The word "catechism" derives from a word which the ancient Greeks used in reference to the theatre and which means "to make resound like an echo".

for many centuries and the famous *Baltimore Catechism*, approved by the Bishops of the United States of America in the late nineteenth century. The 1566 Roman *Catechism of the Council of Trent* is the famous predecessor of this new universal catechism. Why did the *CCC* come into being when so many fine catechisms were already available to the church, and how?

2.1.1 The Proposal.

On the 25th of January 1985, Pope John Paul II convoked an extraordinary assembly of the Synod of Bishops "...for the 20th anniversary of the close of the (Second Vatican) Council" (Pope John Paul II 1995:2). But, in the words of Cardinal Ratzinger, "(t)he synod²³ was meant to be more than a solemn commemoration of that great event in the history of the Church. Its task was to look not only to the past, but also to the future" (Ratzinger 1994:11). Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI) is perhaps the chief architect of the *CCC*, and as such his perspective as to what this looking to the past and to the present by the extraordinary synod entailed is important. He sees the synod's purpose (cf. 1994:11) as having been fourfold, namely to:

- Pinpoint the situation of church;
- Recall the principal intention of the Second Vatican Council;
- Ask how to make that intention our own today;
- Render that intention fruitful for tomorrow.

This is the context in which "...there arose the idea for a new catechism of the universal church analogous to the Roman Catechism of 1566" (Ratzinger 1994:11). But the idea for a Catechism of Vatican II was not new. Already in the closing stages of the Second Vatican Council, "...the German Cardinal Jäger had proposed the commissioning of such a book in order to give concrete form to the work of *aggiornamento*²⁴ in the area of doctrine" (Ratzinger 1994:11). As early as March 1966 certain aspects of a catechism published by the Dutch bishops' conference²⁵ raised some serious questions. A commission of six cardinals investigated these questions and, in October 1968, submitted a report that, in a characteristic understatement by Ratzinger, "...did not take issue with the 'praiseworthy' originality of the Dutch catechism but found it necessary

²³ The synod convened in October of 1985 in Rome.

²⁴ "Updating".

²⁵ This catechism was not officially approved by the Dutch ecclesial hierarchy and only had Cardinal Alfrink's permission to be published. Serious questions about the catechism soon were raised, causing Cardinal Alfrink to withdraw his permission temporarily. Subsequent alterations and an exchange of documents between Rome and the Dutch bishops ultimately led to the Dutch Catechism being published with an appendix and it now enjoys the approval of both Rome and the Dutch hierarchy.

to render more precise, indeed to correct altogether, the affirmations regarding certain fundamental points” (Ratzinger 1994:12). In Ratzinger’s perspective, “(a)t this time the question arose spontaneously whether the best response to the difficulties connected with this volume might not be to compose a catechism for the entire church” (1994:12). Ratzinger’s view was that the time was not yet ripe for such a project because, in his words, “it is inevitable that whoever binds himself too rashly to today too soon looks old-fashioned tomorrow” (1994:12). Ratzinger saw this reality confirmed in the fact that all the new post-Council catechisms produced in many places, “with their hasty *aggiornamento*, had themselves begun to look dated” (1994:12). Ratzinger (1994:12) wanted to allow time for the “process of fermentation (that) had just begun (and) which could lead only gradually to the clarification necessary for a new common word”.

In the minds of the bishops at the Synod in 1985, this process of fermentation had been allowed enough time and “the conviction took place in their minds, as if of its own accord, that the moment (for a new universal catechism) had now arrived and that the matter must not be delayed any further” (Ratzinger 1994:12).

2.1.2 The Process.

On 10 July 1986 Pope John Paul II appointed a commission of 12 bishops and cardinals, chaired by Cardinal Ratzinger and “representing the most important curial offices involved in the project as well as the great cultural spheres of the Catholic Church” (Ratzinger 1994:15). The commission met for the first time in November 1986. In the course of the next six years the commission carefully drafted and edited nine drafts of the *CCC*. On 11 October 1992, on the thirtieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, and in the fourteenth year of his Pontificate, Pope John Paul II finally presented to the church the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. In his words:

The process was the object of extensive consultation among all Catholic Bishops, their Episcopal Conferences or Synods, and of theological and catechetical institutes. As a whole it received a broadly favourable acceptance on the part of the Episcopate. It can be said that this *Catechism* is the result of the collaboration of the whole Episcopate of the Catholic Church, who generously accepted my invitation to share responsibility for an enterprise, which directly concerns the life of the Church. This response elicits in me a deep feeling of joy, because the harmony of so many voices truly express what could be called the “symphony” of the faith²⁶.

²⁶ In *Apostolic Constitution Fidei Depositum*, included as a Preface to the *CCC*.

2.1.3 The Purposes.

The extraordinary synod of 1985 at which the *CCC* was proposed intended, among other things, "...to ask how to make ... (the principal) intention of the (Second Vatican) Council our own today and to render it fruitful for tomorrow" (1994:11). The fact that Cardinals Ratzinger and Schönborn state this perspective in their setting out of the prehistory of the *CCC* in their *Introduction to the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994:11) seems to indicate that they see in the *CCC* a major instrument (if not *the* instrument) by means of which to render fruitful the principal intention of Vatican II. Catholic author, broadcaster and journalist, Joanna Bogle seems to share this view when she describes the *CCC* as "the first major fruit of Vatican II" (2006:28). Undoubtedly, not everyone in the Catholic Church will share this perspective, but it does dwell in illustrious Catholic circles. It is clear that the main architects of the *CCC* intended it to be, among other things, a means by which to present to the Church and the world that which they see as the principal intention of Vatican II.

However successful in or faithful to their own stated purpose the architects of the *CCC* may or may not have been, it can be accepted that the spirit of Vatican II- that spirit that stated doctrine in such irenic and positive terms rather than in stinging anathemas, does shine through in the *CCC* in a way that can, and ought to, facilitate ecumenical dialogue between Reformed Baptists and Roman Catholics, no less between the *Sola 5* group and South African Catholics.

Speaking more specifically to the general purpose of a catechism as such, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger asserts that the "...paramount task (of catechesis) is the transmission of knowledge of the faith" (1994:7). Given his involvement with the *CCC*, it seems safe to assume that he would see the *CCC* as the principal means by which knowledge of the faith must be transmitted.

John H. Pollard²⁷ succinctly states several of the important functions served by the *CCC*:

- 1) It conveys the essential and fundamental content of Catholic faith and morals in a complete and summary way.
- 2) It is a point of reference for national and diocesan catechisms.

²⁷ John Pollard at http://books.google.co.za/books?id=QLbfl1iijp-cC&pg=PA1&lpg=PA1&dq=Pollard+on+United+States+Bishops+Conference+on+the+Catechism&source=web&ots=5152mCg_6H&sig=_pQ18Tmk4o5DIeOVfvPQTSXmUko&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=1&ct=result#PPA2,M1, accessed on 27 October 2008.

- 3) It is a positive, objective and declarative exposition of Catholic doctrine.
- 4) It is intended to assist those who have the duty to catechise, namely promoters and teachers of catechesis.

2.1.4 The Product.

It has already been indicated how Pope John Paul II, Cardinal Ratzinger and Cardinal Schönborn associated the content of the *CCC* with the intentions of Vatican II. But many Catholics would take serious issue with such an association. In the perspective of many Catholics, especially more liberal-minded ones, the *CCC* does little else than embed the ecclesiology of its main architects, Ratzinger and company and, in doing so, deviates from or even reverses the ecclesiology of Vatican II. A strong statement to this effect comes from Hansjürgen Verweyen in his commentary on the *CCC*: *Der Weltkatechismus: Therapie oder Symptom eine kranken Kirche?*²⁸ John R. Allen (2000:105) remarks that “...(Verweyen) quotes documents of Vatican II and even Ratzinger’s own work to show that ...(the *CCC*) is not a neutral presentation of the Catholic tradition, but rather, in certain places, a deliberate reshaping of that tradition to serve the political and ecclesial ends of the present papacy (that of Pope John Paul II)”. Remarks such as this one indicate just how divergent opinions are among Catholic thinkers as to what the “true spirit of Vatican II” is.

The same also indicates how mixed is the reception that the *Catechism* has had in the Catholic Church. As Prof. Susan Rakoczy²⁹ points out, various professional groups of theologians and individual theologians in different countries had many criticisms of the *Catechism*. Not all were satisfied that the *CCC* is the result of the work of the entire theological and cultural spectrum of the Catholic Church. Hans Küng, for instance, asserts that it is a “catechism of the Roman party”³⁰, in which “everything was decided by a curial commission” (1993:273).

In the face of all these strong assertions and others like it, Pope John Paul II could boldly assert, in the Apostolic Constitution *Fidei Depositum*, which accompanies the *CCC*, that: “As a whole ...(the *CCC*) received a broadly favourable acceptance on the part of the Episcopate” (1995:4). Concerning the doctrinal value of the text of the *CCC* Pope John Paul II declared as follows in paragraph 3 of the same document:

²⁸ The universal Catechism: Therapy, or symptom of a sick church?

²⁹ In a private comment to the present writer.

³⁰ One Catholic theologian, in private conversation with the present writer, referred to the Catechism as “the Vaticism”.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is a statement of the Church's faith and of its catholic doctrine, attested to by Sacred Scripture, the Apostolic Tradition, and the Church's Magisterium. I declare it to be a sure norm for teaching the faith and thus a valid and legitimate instrument for ecclesial communion. May it serve the renewal to which the Holy Spirit ceaselessly calls the church of God, the Body of Christ, on her pilgrimage to the undiminished light of the Kingdom!

As “a sure norm” and a “valid and legitimate instrument for ecclesial communion”, what authority does the *CCC* carry? William H Shannon answers:

... (I)t is important for us to realize, as we read ... (the *CCC*) that the statements it makes do not all have the same authority or importance. Statements from the councils of the Church have the highest authority, since they come from the highest teaching body of the church, the pope and bishops gathered together in solemn assembly. Statements from individual Fathers of the church have whatever authority they possessed before they were included in the *Catechism* (1995:10).

Shannon points out that this is the position taken by the man whom Pope John Paul II charged to bring the *Catechism* to completion, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, and quotes a statement made by Cardinal Ratzinger (1995:10) in a seminar held on the 9th of July 1993, in Madrid: “Every doctrinal point proposed by the *Catechism* has no authority but that which it already possesses”. At the same time, as Evangelicals Mark Noll³¹, and Carolyn Nystrom (2005:116) point out: “If something is not in the *Catechism*, it is not Catholic teaching. If something is in the *Catechism*, it is official Catholic doctrine”.

In a real sense, as a “valid and legitimate instrument *for ecclesial communion*” the entire *CCC* is ecclesiology. The introduction to *The Catechism of the Catholic Church Compendium* (2005:12) clearly indicates how the *CCC* is arranged in four parts, “...corresponding to the fundamental laws of life in Christ”. Part one contains the *lex credendi*, the Faith professed by the Catholic Church. The second part sets out the *lex celebrandi*, the sacramental life of the Church. Part three “recalls the *lex vivendi* through which the baptized manifest their commitment to the faith they have professed and celebrated, through their actions and ethical choices”. Finally, part four describes the *lex orandi*- the church's life of prayer. In short, the entire *CCC* is Catholic ecclesiology of the highest order. One would be hard pressed to find anything in Evangelicalism that comes even close to this document in scope, articulation, and devotional power.

³¹ Mark Noll, an evangelical scholar, recently named by TIME magazine as one of the 25 most influential evangelicals in the world, whilst remaining an evangelical, left Wheaton College in 2006 to take up the chair of Francis A. McAnaney Professor of History at the University of Notre Dame. Noll is highly esteemed and fondly regarded by Reformed Baptists, also within the *Sola 5* group.

How do evangelical Protestants, including Reformed Baptists see the *CCC*? Sadly, most do not see it at all. Those who do care to have an objective look, generally come away impressed and edified in many areas. Noll and Nystrom (2005:119) are good examples when they "...estimate that evangelicals can embrace at least two-thirds of the Catechism. These parts of the Catechism contain a common orthodoxy, a common devotion to God (with numerous ways to express that devotion) and a common understanding of holy living". This may be true, but significantly ecclesiology is absent from the list of things Evangelicals can embrace in the *CCC*.

That, then, is a brief historical background to the *CCC*. The historical background to the *1689 BCF* will now be considered.

2.2 The Historical Background of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith.

Outlining the historical background to the *1689 BCF* is a somewhat more complex exercise than is the case with the *CCC*. This is so because the history of the Baptist movement³² contains a complexity derived from the complexity of Baptist identity. Nettles is correct in his observation that "(i)t is with difficulty that ...(people) strive to define 'Baptists'³³" (2002:13).

In 1950 Robert G. Torbett identified three classifications of Baptist theories of origin that had by then emerged in Baptist historiography (Bryan 1966).³⁴ These are: The Successionist Theory which traces the origin of Baptists back to the days of Jesus' ministry; the Anabaptist Kinship Theory which "...trace(s) a spiritual relationship of Baptists through the long line of Anabaptist sects..." (Bryan 1966) and the English Separatist descent theory, which is the view that "...only those to whom the name Baptist was actually applied should be so considered (to be "Baptists")..." (Bryan 1966). From this point of departure it is argued that Baptists, as "Baptists", sprang from the English Separatist Congregationalism of the seventeenth century. It can be safely acknowledged that the historical data can be selected and presented in a way that could make any one of these theories seem quite convincing. Probably for this reason, Philip

³² Even the use of the term "movement" in relation to Baptists can be problematic, for a valid argument can be made that there is no sufficient cohesion among all groups that use the name "Baptist" to refer to "the Baptist movement".

³³ This complexity is well recognised among Baptists, so much so, that good-humoured, self-effacing Baptist folklore has it that between every two Baptists there are three different views on Baptist history, and each view is held with equal conviction.

³⁴ This work was produced as a thesis for the Master of Arts degree at Baylor University, Waco Texas in 1966.

Bryan (1966) ends his excellent critique of the English Separatist Descent Theory with these words:

A wise course (for the various advocates of these various theories of Baptist origins and history), would be ... (for them) to admit that, granted the validity of their theological convictions³⁵, their theory of Baptist origins only approximates historical fact.

These realities make the placing of the *1689 BCF* within its proper context in Baptist history somewhat more complex than is the same exercise with regard to the *CCC* and the Roman Catholic Church. For the purposes of this thesis, this task can be greatly and safely simplified by cutting through the dense underbrush of the complexity of Baptist history and identity by means of the rigid and sharp fact that the *1689 BCF* is the creed of a particular stream of *English* Baptists, namely Particular³⁶ Baptists. But such an approach would likely not be left unchallenged by even descendants of Particular Baptists. Consider these words of perhaps the most illustrious³⁷ of such descendants, Charles Spurgeon³⁸:

We believe that the Baptists are the original Christians. We did not commence our existence at the reformation, we were reformers before Luther and Calvin were born; we never came from the Church of Rome, for we were never in it, but we have an unbroken line up to the apostles themselves. We have always existed from the days of Christ, and our principles, sometimes veiled and forgotten, like a river, which may travel under ground for a season, have always had honest and holy adherents³⁹. ... (We have been) (p)ersecuted alike by Romanists and Protestants of almost every sect...⁴⁰.

Likewise, with reference to the *1689 BCF* Spurgeon states:

This ancient document is a most excellent epitome of the things most surely believed among us. ... Be not ashamed of your faith; remember it is the ancient gospel of martyrs, confessors, reformers, and saints (Masters 1981:3).

³⁵ Given the assertiveness with which theological conviction can shape historical perspective, Bryan is wise to include this proviso in his statement.

³⁶ So-called because of their (Calvinist) belief in “particular” redemption, i.e. that Christ’s death on the cross was only for a particular section of humanity, namely the “elect”, as opposed to “General” Baptists who, (following the Dutch theologian Arminius), hold to “general” redemption, i.e. that Christ’s death on the cross was for all of humanity.

³⁷ It has been said in jest that Spurgeon is the patron saint of Reformed Baptists.

³⁸ In 1855 in his introduction to his issue, primarily for the members of his own congregation, of a reprinting of the *1689 BCF*.

³⁹ This claim is, of course, made by every single Christian or quasi Christian sect

⁴⁰ Spurgeon’s view may be described as a form of successionism. The most extreme, if not idiosyncratic form of successionism, called the “Trail of Blood” or “Landmarkist” view, was popularised in 1931 by Texas Baptist leader, J.M. Carroll in a 56-page booklet entitled “The Trail of Blood”. Carroll’s pamphlet alleges that the Roman Catholic Church, throughout history, by persecution drove true baptistic churches underground. In a detailed chart “illustrating the history of the Baptist churches from the time of their founder, the Lord Jesus Christ, until the 20th century” Carroll, by means of series of red dots traces the “trail of blood” of true, baptistic martyrs and churches. Carroll’s pamphlet and chart is widely available on the internet. It can be accessed at: <http://users.aol.com/libcfl/trail.htm> Responsible historians look upon Carroll’s view as somewhat idiosyncratic, to say the least.

It may be safely granted that various aspects of the *1689 BCF* have at various times been part of the “ancient gospel of (certain) martyrs, confessors, reformers and saints”. But any assertion that the *1689 BCF* as a whole and as it stands is *the* ancient gospel of such worthies even before the seventeenth century, would be sheer anachronism. And so, despite Spurgeon’s strong and at least partially valid assertions and others like it, the clear English Separatist links of the *1689 BCF*, as a whole and as it stands, can hardly be denied. This fact indisputably makes of the *1689 BCF* a post-Reformation document. It is the “*1689*” *BCF*, after all and the *1689 BCF* is exclusively a creed and (almost without exception today, *the* creed) of what is popularly called “Reformed” or “Calvinist” Baptists. It must therefore be treated as a document of children of the Protestant Reformation, particularly of the Calvinist strand and, more particularly, of the Calvinist strand, which sprang from the *English* Reformation; more specifically still, from the Separatist Puritan Congregationalism of seventeenth century England⁴¹.

It may be stated without much fear of contradiction that the creation of the *1689 BCF* is linked to early English Baptist history and the differences between the “General” and “Particular” brands of Baptist belief, as well as to influences of early English Congregationalism and Puritanism. During the early seventeenth century, the English Baptist churches, as an offshoot of the English Reformation, were not yet organised in a denomination.⁴² At that time a sure measure of division occurred between the General Baptists and the Particular Baptists. In order to formally indicate their doctrinal distinctiveness from the General Baptists, representatives of seven Particular Baptist congregations gathered in London in 1644 and drew up a non-comprehensive, distinctly Calvinistic Confession of Faith. Although these Particular Baptists had fond associations with other English Calvinists (Anglican as well as Congregationalist) and with the General Baptists, the London Confession of Faith distinguished them from the former by means of its emphasis on the baptism of believers⁴³ and from the latter by means of statements on election, particular redemption, the fallen state of the human

⁴¹ It must be kept in mind throughout that several Anabaptist influences upon even Reformed Baptists can be fairly easily indicated, although the *1689 BCF* contains certain statements aimed at correcting certain Anabaptist excesses.

⁴² Most Baptists, especially Reformed Baptists, have an aversion to the very concept “denomination”, in the common sense of the term, seeing no biblical basis for it. So, for instance, the Baptist Union of Southern Africa begins its definition of itself with a denial that it is a denomination, stating: “The Baptist Union of Southern Africa is not a denomination: It is a voluntary fellowship of like-minded autonomous local churches, who pool their resources and efforts for the furtherance of the Gospel”.

⁴³ Originally, the mode of baptism was, almost without exception, by affusion (the pouring of water onto the candidate). It was only in the latter part of the seventeenth century that the Baptist mode of baptism became almost entirely by immersion.

will, and the perseverance of the saints. “Known as the *London Confession* it was revised in 1651 (with statements to counter the Quaker “inner light” method of interpreting Scripture, a teaching which has returned again in the ‘higher life’ movement)” (Masters 1981:5).

In 1647 the famous Westminster Confession of Faith, the comprehensive statement of faith of Anglicans and Scottish Presbyterians, appeared. In 1658 the Congregationalists, reworking some aspects of its ecclesiology, honed from the Westminster Confession their own Statement of Faith, called the Savoy Declaration. The Particular Baptists followed suit in 1677 when the representatives of a number of Particular Baptist congregations gathered in London to draw up a more comprehensive confession of their own, using as basis the Westminster Confession⁴⁴. Peter Masters describes the event:

...(I)n 1677 the Particular Baptists also took the Westminster Confession as the basis of a new confession. They made changes to the articles covering the church, the ordinances and the civil magistrate (sometimes following the Savoy Declaration), also slightly altering and extending some other passages. This was published (during a period of fierce persecution) as, *The Second London Confession...Put forth by the Elders and Brethren of many congregations of Christians (baptised upon profession of their faith) in London and the country* (1981:5).

An important point of conflict at this time had to do with liturgy.⁴⁵ The Puritans and Particular Baptists, in an application to worship of the formal principle of the Reformation (*Sola Scriptura*) insisted on a liturgical principle called the *Regulative Principle of Worship*.⁴⁶ This principle states that God must be worshipped only in ways and by means explicitly prescribed by God, nothing being added or excluded (cf. Deut. 12:29-32). The Anglicans, on the other hand, held to what is called the *Formative Principle of Worship*⁴⁷, which ascribed to the church the power to decree rites or ceremonies that are not contrary to God’s written word. *The Book of Common Prayer* contained precisely such rites and ceremonies decreed by the Church of England. The

⁴⁴ Waldron (1989:311) points out that Chapter 26 of the *1689 BCF* (the chapter on ecclesiology) is one of the chapters in which the it differs most from the Westminster Confession of Faith and adds that: “The doctrine of the church separates the Baptist Puritans from the Presbyterian Puritans”.

⁴⁵ Although this thesis cannot digress into a discussion of liturgy here, this point is very important to the intent of this paper, because, as will be shown, liturgy is very much part of the theological framework of the *CCC*. Given the great liturgical common ground between Catholics and Anglicans, whatever points of conflict existed with regard to liturgy between Puritans (including Reformed Baptists) and Anglicans at the time the Act of Uniformity was in place, will still exist between Reformed Baptists and Catholics insofar as the ecclesiology of the *CCC* is shaped by or expresses that liturgical common ground between Catholics and Anglicans that the Puritans found so objectionable.

⁴⁶ Expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith Ch. 22 para. 1, and in the *1689 BCF* Ch. 22 para. 1.

⁴⁷ The 20th Article of the 39 articles of the Church of England.

Act of Uniformity⁴⁸ which by then had been in force for about fifteen years, made compulsory the use of *The Book of Common Prayer* in England. To this, the Puritans and Particular Baptists openly dissented. This dissension elicited widespread overt and covert persecution of the dissenters. This persecution formed the key theological and social context of the eventual foundation of the *1689 BCF*. Due to the persecution of the dissenters, the widespread and open adoption of the 1677 Confession did not take place.

The persecution was brought to an end by the Act of Toleration⁴⁹ of 24 May 1689. In an exercise of their newfound freedom the representatives of at least one hundred Particular Baptist congregations assembled in London in 1689 and formerly ratified and adopted the Confession of 1677. In this way the 1677 Confession became the “1689” (or Second London) Baptist Confession of Faith and remains the standard confession of faith of Reformed Baptists.

2.3 Conclusion.

It is important to keep in mind, as the ecclesiology of the *CCC* is compared with that of the *1689 BCF* that two documents from different historical eras are being compared. The *1689 BCF*, more so than the *CCC*, may be said to have a polemical thrust and intent. It was born in an atmosphere of polemics. It is polemical in the sense that it seeks to set itself apart from- and in opposition to all that contradicts it. The *CCC*, on the other hand, has a more ecumenical spirit and arguably a more irenic and pastoral tone. The *CCC* shares the freedom from anathemas that marks Vatican II. Consequently, as far as its ecclesiology is concerned, it emulates *Lumen Gentium* in its freedom from anathemas. These realities are the fruit of the respective historical contexts from which these documents sprang. These realities are important when the two documents are compared, especially when it is done with a desire to facilitate dialogue. It is true, on the one hand, that the *CCC* conveys to large measure the ecumenical spirit of Vatican II, thus opening the door to dialogue also with Reformed Baptists. On the other hand the latter will nevertheless consider major aspects of *CCC*

⁴⁸ The Act of Uniformity was an act of Parliament in England, which had been passed in 1662 during the reign of Charles II and which made compulsory in all Church of England services the use of all the rites and ceremonies stipulated in *The Book of Common Prayer*. Nearly two thousand clergymen dissented to the Act of Uniformity, became known as “Dissenters”, were, in derision, called “Puritans” (for their insistence on Christian purity in life and worship) and were driven from the Church of England in what became known as “The Great Ejection”. It was in these turbulent days that the famous Baptist John Bunyan, during imprisonment, wrote his famous *The Pilgrim’s Progress*.

⁴⁹ The Act of Toleration granted freedom of worship to Non-conformists to the Book of Common Prayer, such as Baptists, Congregationalists and Puritans who had taken the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy and who rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation. Catholics and Quakers were excluded by the Act of Toleration.

ecclesiology incompatible with the ecclesiology of the *1689 BCF*. In such an exercise the adherents of the *1689 BCF* are likely to adopt a less ecumenical spirit than will the *CCC* and its adherents.

Chapter Three
The Theological Frameworks of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith and the Implications of their Similarities and Differences

This chapter will discuss how the different, yet overlapping theological frameworks of the *CCC* and *1689 BCF* produce their different conclusions. By theological framework is meant theological frames of reference, or sources. Perhaps no other single factor accounts more for the differences between the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF* than their different theological frameworks. At the heart of the matter are the two opposing views on the relation between Scripture and Tradition.⁵⁰ Reformed Baptists hold to the formal principle of the Reformation, namely *Sola Scriptura*. The Catholic Church honours the Apostolic Tradition and the Magisterium of the Church in tandem with a high view of Scripture. This theological framework of the *CCC* will be described and discussed first, with reference to how it shapes an ecclesiology that differs from, yet resembles in aspects, the ecclesiology of the *1689 BCF*. Thereafter the same will be done with regard to the *1689 BCF*.

3.1 The Theological Framework of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

The Prologue of the *CCC* clearly identifies its own theological framework in paragraph 11: "... (The Catechism's) principal sources are the sacred Scriptures, the Fathers of the Church, the liturgy and the Church's magisterium". Although this statement does clearly identify the theological framework of the *CCC*, it does not as clearly circumscribe it. The mentioned sources are not claimed to be the sole and exclusive sources of the *CCC*, but only its *principal* sources. A statement by Pope John Paul II seems to circumscribe the theological framework of the *CCC* more precisely: "... (The *CCC* embodies a)... statement of the Church's faith and of its catholic doctrine, *attested to by Sacred Scripture, the Apostolic Tradition, and the Church's Magisterium* (1995:5) (emphasis added). These two statements are merged in the *CCC*'s categorical statement on the authority of Scripture:

...(T)he Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of revelation is entrusted, "does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honoured with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence."⁵¹ (*CCC* 82).

⁵⁰ This matter cannot be treated in any depth here and will only be mentioned insofar as it touches upon ecclesiology.

⁵¹ The statement in quotation marks is from paragraph 44 of *Dei Verbum*, Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution of the Catholic Church on Revelation.

3.1.1 The Scriptures as Part of the Theological Framework of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Contrary to the impression that exists in the minds of many evangelicals and Reformed Baptists in particular, the Catholic Church (and therefore the *CCC*) “...has always venerated the Scriptures as she venerates the Lord’s Body” (*CCC* 103). And, “...(i)n the sacred Scripture, the Church constantly finds her nourishment and her strength, for she welcomes it not as a human word, ‘but as what it really is, the word of God’”⁵². In paragraphs 105-107 the divine authorship, inspiration and veracity of the Scriptures is clearly and eloquently affirmed. Another strong indication of precisely how seriously the *CCC* takes Scripture is found in the footnotes⁵³ of the *CCC*. There is hardly a paragraph in the *CCC* that does not contain a reference to Scripture- often more than one. There can be no doubt that when the *CCC* says that Scripture must be accepted and honoured, it means what it says.

In addition to this high view of Scripture, the *CCC*, in paragraphs 112-114, follows the Second Vatican Council in supplying three criteria for interpreting Scripture, thereby showing Catholic hermeneutics to be on a par, to say the least, with the best in evangelical hermeneutics:

1. Be especially attentive to the content and unity of the whole Scripture.
2. Read the Scripture within the living tradition of the whole church.
3. Be attentive to the analogy of faith.⁵⁴

It would not be unfair to say that evangelical hermeneutics, as popularly practiced, often lack the second criterion. There is often an alarming and quite widespread tendency among Evangelicals towards private interpretation of Scripture⁵⁵. It is probably true that Reformed Baptists are less prone to this, adhering closely to the interpretations set out in the *1689 BCF* in the way they use Scripture, thus almost treating it as a kind of magisterium in its own right whilst denying to be doing so. In this way they read the Scripture within the tradition of the *1689 BCF*. But it is to be questioned if this is a “living” tradition and it certainly is not the tradition of the *whole* church. Thus,

⁵² The statement in quotation marks contains a reference to 1 Thes. 2:13.

⁵³ See *The Companion to the Catechism of the Catholic Church* This monumental work gathers together in one volume all the reference texts and references to important documents in the *CCC*. It contains 979 pages.

⁵⁴ By which the *CCC* means “...the coherence of the truths of faith among themselves and within the whole plan of Revelation” (*CCC* 114).

⁵⁵ Whilst Catholics may have one infallible pope many miles away, Protestants often have many “infallible popes” one mile away.

Reformed Baptists, as Evangelicals, whilst not given to the same measure of mercenary hermeneutics as some other Evangelicals, nevertheless do not read the Bible within the *living* tradition of the *whole* church in the same sense as Catholics do.

3.1.2 Tradition and the Magisterium as Part of the Theological Framework of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Equally emphatic statements and the same footnotes of the *CCC* show how seriously the *CCC* takes the Tradition and Magisterium of the Church, and, it must be said, especially the documents of Vatican II. Tradition, more accurately the Apostolic Tradition, consists of the succession of the apostles and includes the Fathers of the church, the church's Magisterium (which includes the teachings of the ecumenical councils, e.g. Nicaea, Trent, Vatican I and Vatican II) and the Liturgy.⁵⁶ Paragraph 82 of the *CCC* seems to make clear that there is no hierarchical order in the authority of these sources, but rather an equality and complementariness. Thus it goes without saying that no aspect of these sources can contradict any other aspect in itself or in any one of the other sources. For instance, the liturgy cannot contain an element that is contrary to Scripture. Likewise, no statement of Scripture must be interpreted in a way that renders unscriptural any aspect of the liturgy or the Magisterium of the Church (the Scripture must be read in the living tradition of the church). Any statement from any individual Father of the church carries only (and all of) whatever authority it has been granted by Scripture and the Magisterium of the church. Understanding things in this way absolves the Catholic Church of the rather common charge from evangelicals that it adds to Scripture "the traditions of men".

Catholic thinking as to the relation between Scripture and Tradition is set out in *CCC* 80. Quoting *Lumen Gentium*, it reads as follows:

Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together, and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out from the same divine well-spring, come together in some fashion to form one thing, and move towards the same goal.⁵⁷ Each of them makes present and fruitful in the Church the mystery of Christ, who promised to remain with his own always, to the close of the age.

⁵⁶ The Liturgy expresses what the church confesses.

⁵⁷ The statement in quotation marks is from *Dei Verbum* para. 9.

The Magisterium⁵⁸ is the interpretive authority of the Catholic Church and consists of the episcopacy headed by the Bishop of Rome (the Pope), who has authority over the bishops, as individuals and as a body. As *CCC* 85 and 86 make clear:

85 The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. This means that the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome. 86 Yet this Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God, but is its servant. It teaches only what has been handed on to it. At the divine command and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it listens to this devotedly, guards it with dedication and expounds it faithfully. All that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed is drawn from this single deposit of faith.

According to these statements, the Magisterium is the interpretive authority of the church⁵⁹. At the same time the *CCC*, in paragraphs 109-114 clearly affirms the Holy Spirit to be the Interpreter of the Scripture. The chief objection on the part of evangelicals to this idea of an interpretive authority in the Magisterium, (especially an infallible one) is found in the argument that the Magisterium has often erred and even contradicted itself.⁶⁰

3.1.3 The Liturgy as Part of the Theological Framework of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Although liturgy⁶¹ is not the focus of this thesis, an indication of how it operates as part of the theological framework of the *CCC* to shape ecclesiology is essential in light of how starkly this operation stands in contrast to the theological framework of the *1689 BCF*, and the problems this would present in ecumenical dialogue.

Scott Hahn (2005:12) asserts that “(in the ancient world), the ordinary place of biblical interpretation was the church, and the ordinary time was the liturgy. ...(T)he church’s liturgy, its public, ritual worship- was the natural and supernatural habitat of the church’s scriptures” (2005:9). Hahn (2005:9) explores “the liturgical content of the Bible and the liturgical context in which the Scriptures were first produced, canonized,

⁵⁸ The fact that it is the Magisterium *of the church* makes this brief discussion extremely relevant to ecclesiology.

⁵⁹ It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss the issue of the infallibility of the Magisterium, except to say that, in Catholic thinking, an infallible book without an infallible interpreter is not infallible. This is a strong argument.

⁶⁰ No one has ever put this argument with greater force than Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms in 1521 when he said: “I believe neither the Pope nor the Councils, since they have often erred and contradicted one another”.

⁶¹ It must be pointed out that the principles of worship that underlie the Catholic Faith are far broader and far more complex and far richer than the Anglican Formative Principle of Worship. Some Reformed Baptist theologians make the mistake of bluntly equating the principles that underlie the Catholic liturgy with the Formative Principle. The liturgy (as the *lex celebrandi*) is set out in Part 2 of the *CCC*.

and proclaimed” and convincingly demonstrates “...the living relationship between scripture and liturgy, and how this relationship enables both, together, to draw believers, as active participants (in the liturgy), into the divine drama of salvation history”. Thus, in Catholic theology, liturgy, in its living relationship to Scripture, is at the same time part of the ecclesiology of the church, and, from within that relationship with scripture, a tool for shaping ecclesiology. As will be shown later, in the thinking of Baptists, as non-Eucharistic⁶² Protestants, liturgy is little more than a procedure- an order of service, as it were. But in the Catholic understanding liturgy “...is not some *thing* at all but *someone*: Jesus Christ who becomes really present and active in the liturgy” (Keating 2001:281). As the Head of the church present in the liturgy, the Lord Jesus Christ is not shaped by creeds, confessions and catechisms, but rather, he is the shaper of these. In fact, the Lord Jesus Christ is the substance of the church. In this sense the liturgy of the church is a source, and not merely a substance of the *CCC*. As will be shown later, the Puritan Regulative Principle of the Church, as set out in *1689 BCF* 22:1, is incompatible with such a view. As for the relationship between liturgy and Tradition, the *CCC* states: “Liturgy is a constitutive element of the holy and living Tradition” (1124).

3.2 The Theological Framework of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith: *Sola Scriptura*.

As a deliberate counter to the idea⁶³ that councils, Tradition or the Magisterium of the church are on an equal footing with Scripture, the *1689 BCF*, in chapter 1 paragraph 10, contains the following statement:

The supreme judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other than the Holy Scripture, delivered by the Spirit, into which Scripture, so delivered, our faith is finally resolved.

And in chapter 1, paragraph 6:

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelation of the Spirit, or traditions of men (*1689 BCF* 1:6).

In these two paragraphs we have the Reformed Baptist statement of the formal principle of the Reformation, namely *Sola Scriptura*. These concise, categorical statements in the

⁶² This refers to those who do not believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

⁶³ In operation in the Catholic Church long before the appearance of the *CCC*, of course, and therefore at the time of the appearance of the *1689 BCF*.

1689 BCF clearly identify, describe and circumscribe the theological framework that underlies the entire *1689 BCF*. It is Scripture alone. Of special interest here is how starkly these statements are contradicted by paragraph 82 of the *CCC*:

...(T)he Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of revelation is entrusted, “does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honoured with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence.”⁶⁴ (*CCC* 82)

It is not within the scope of this thesis to take up again the old *Sola Scriptura* polemic between Protestants and Catholics, except to say that Catholics continue to see in *Sola Scriptura* “insurmountable problems” (Salza 2005:18) such as, for instance, so the argument goes, that the Bible itself does not instruct us to follow the Bible alone.⁶⁵

However insurmountable Catholics may deem the problems of *Sola Scriptura* to be, it cannot be disputed that in their adherence to the principle Reformed Baptists, like Catholics (in their way of honouring Tradition in tandem with Scripture), have a high view of the Scriptures. Thus, the differences in ecclesiology between the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF* are not the result of a high view of Scripture as opposed to a low view of Scripture, but of a high view of Scripture on both sides, with, as already pointed out, the *CCC* amplifying and complementing, (rather than supplementing) Scripture by the Apostolic Tradition, the Magisterium of the Church and the liturgy.

3.2.1 The Role of the Puritan Regulative Principle of the Church in Shaping the Ecclesiology of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith.

It is to this, what they see as amplifying and complementing of Scripture by liturgy that Reformed Baptists strongly object. The *1689 BCF* begins with Scripture, gives no consideration to any tradition or magisterium, and works its way from there to an ecclesiology (including liturgy) that is shaped by Scripture alone.

In the words of Beasley-Murray:

Whereas some of the great state churches have sought to maintain a balance between ‘scripture’, ‘tradition’ and ‘reason’, Baptists have declared

⁶⁴ The statement in quotation marks is from paragraph 44 of *Dei Verbum*, the Dogmatic Constitution of the Catholic Church on Revelation.

⁶⁵ Adherents to the *1689 BCF* are presented with another troubling question by the way in which chapter 1, paragraph 6 (quoted above) seems to be carefully and deliberately worded so as to totally subject everything in Christian history, including the Magisterium of the Church and everything ever said by any Church Father, *as well as the 1689 BCF itself*, to fresh and continual scrutiny in the light of Scripture. This immediately raises the questions when, if ever, anything in our faith has been “finally resolved”? Who decides this? The drafters of the *1689 BCF*?

emphatically that Scripture alone must have the last word. Hence the desire of Baptists to model the life of their churches on that of the New Testament church. In a very real sense Baptists are ‘restorationists’: they have sought to restore the church in the light of principles discovered in Scripture (1992:114).

The Puritans and the Reformed Baptists of the seventeenth century saw the vestiges of Catholicism in the Anglican *Formative Principle of the Church*, as this principle found expression in *The Book of Common Prayer*. The Anglican *Formative Principle of Worship* is expressed as follows in the twentieth article of the Thirty Nine Articles of the Church of England:

The Church hath power to decree Rites or Ceremonies, and authority in Controversies of Faith: and yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God’s Word written...⁶⁶.

The strong Puritan dissent to the Act of Toleration (which sought to force the Book of Common Prayer upon them) was, no doubt, at least in part an expression of their strong aversion to anything Catholic. The Puritans and Particular Baptists insisted on a principle called the *Regulative Principle of Worship*.⁶⁷ This principle is merely the principle of *Sola Scriptura* applied to Puritan and Reformed Baptist ecclesiology and worship. The principle is expressed as follows in chapter 22, paragraph 1 of the *1689 BCF*:

...(T)he acceptable way of worshipping the true God, is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imagination and devices of men, nor the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representations, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures.

In contrast to the Catholic position, then, liturgy, in the Reformed Baptist view is part of ecclesiology itself and therefore to be shaped by Scripture alone. As already stated, in Catholic thinking, liturgy is both part of the ecclesiology of the church, and a tool for shaping that ecclesiology. This is a very important difference between the theological frameworks of the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF*.

3.3 Conclusion.

The strict adherence, by Reformed Baptists, to the principle of *Sola Scriptura* in shaping ecclesiology (and liturgy), as opposed to Catholic theology, which employs Tradition and Liturgy in its intimate relationship with Scripture as a theological framework for

⁶⁶ http://anglicanonline.org/basics/thirty-nine_articles.html accessed 24/09/2008 at 19:00.

⁶⁷ Expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith Ch. 22 para. 1, and in the *1689 BCF* chapter 22 paragraph 1.

shaping ecclesiology, possibly more than any other single factor, presents a seemingly insurmountable obstacle to meaningful dialogue between Reformed Baptists and Catholics. They are, in a manner of speaking, and no pun intended, not even in the same book, let alone on the same page. A major part of the problem here is that Reformed Baptists do not accept the Magisterium of the church, or do so only very selectively insofar as they accept from councils those pronouncements that they deem orthodox. Furthermore, Reformed Baptists do not see the same intimate relationship between liturgy and the Scriptures that Catholics do. They see liturgy purely as a kind of order of service, which is in every aspect set and shaped by Scripture alone.

It is unlikely that Reformed Baptists will any day soon accept the Magisterium of the church and liturgy together with Scripture as a framework for ecclesiology. At the same time it is unlikely in the extreme that the Catholic Church will ever adopt the principle of *Sola Scriptura*.

Chapter Four
The Concept “Church”, the Designations of the Term in Christian Usage and the Constitution of the Church According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith Respectively

This chapter identifies and discusses the differences and resemblances between the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF* understandings of the concept “church” and the designations of the term in Christian usage. Following this, the constitution of the church (what constitutes the true Church and how the true church is constituted) according to the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF*, respectively, is examined.

4.1 The Concept “Church”.

The precise origin of the word “church” is uncertain. Doyle⁶⁸ remarks that “...(T)he concept of ‘The Church’ ... is a diverse and many-layered idea whose historical roots are complex.” Baptist theologian Millard J. Erickson (1998:1037) agrees that “...(t)he church is at once a very familiar and misunderstood topic” and that “...(p)art of this misunderstanding results from the multiple usages of the term *church*”. In the light of this, the lucidity, yet conciseness with which paragraph 751 of the *CCC* speaks on the term “church” makes it worth quoting in full:

The word “Church” (Latin *ecclesia*, from the Greek *ek-ka-lein*, to “call out of”) means a convocation or an assembly. It designates the assemblies of the people, usually for a religious purpose. *Ekklesia* is used frequently in the Greek Old Testament for the assembly of the Chosen People before God, above all for their assembly on Mount Sinai where Israel received the Law and was established by God as his holy people. By calling itself “Church,” the first community of Christian believers recognized itself as heir to that assembly. In the Church, God is “calling together” his people from all the ends of the earth. The equivalent Greek term *Kyriake*, from which the English word *Church* and the German *Kirche* are derived, means “what belongs to the Lord.”

Although there is no statement in the *1689 BCF* that defines the term “church”, it contains nothing that is not in accord with the above paragraph. In fact, even the most cursory perusal of the chapters on ecclesiology in two systematic theologies from the pens of two leading Baptist theologians, Wayne Grudem (1994:853-854) and Millard Erickson⁶⁹(1998:1041-1044) reveals that they are in complete accord with everything that the *CCC* says on the meaning of the term “church”. Hence the differences between the ecclesiologies of the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF* do not spring from the way in which

⁶⁸ Albert Mohler in “Mohler, Schleiermacher, and the Roots of Communion Ecclesiology” at <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-69059038.html> accessed on 29/03/2010.

⁶⁹ Erickson’s treatment of the term “church” is especially comprehensive and in-depth.

each understands the concept “church”. Important differences begin to emerge, however, between how each understands what the term designates in Christian usage.

4.2 Designations of the Word “Church” in Christian Usage.

The *Baltimore Catechism*, in a definition that derives from the catechisms of the sixteenth century, defines the (Catholic) church as follows:

The Catholic Church is the congregation of the faithful who have received the sacrament of baptism and who share the same Faith, the same sacraments, the same Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and submission to the Sovereign Pontiff (Doyle 1992:29).

For quite obvious reasons Traditionalist Catholics hold very narrowly to this definition. Traditionalist Catholic cleric Fr. Peter Scott⁷⁰ writes:

(In this definition) ... (t)he conditions for belonging to the Church are explicitly laid out, so that it is clear that if a person lacks one of them, then he is not a member of the visible body of the Church, and that if it is knowingly and willingly that he refuses one of these aspects of the Church, that is with pertinacity, then it is impossible for him to save his soul.⁷¹

This being so, it is immediately apparent that what the term “church” designates as it stands defined in the *Baltimore Catechism* sets it at strong issue with Protestantism. This is hardly surprising. Doyle (1992:29) supplies a welcome reminder, though, that the “... (t)he Baltimore Catechism is a direct descendant of ... Counter-Reformation texts. One of its main purposes was the preservation of the Catholic faith in the United States, a Protestant country with a secular school system.”

Undoubtedly not without considerable significance, the *CCC* steers clear of this locking of horns with Protestantism. Unlike the *Baltimore Catechism* and other earlier catechisms, the *CCC*, following *Lumen Gentium*, rather than offer a clear definition of the church, speaks of the church symbolically within the context of the Christian story. Paragraph 752 of the *CCC* explains what the word “church” designates in Christian usage:

In Christian usage, the word “church” designates the liturgical assembly but also the local community or the whole universal community of believers. These three meanings are inseparable. “The Church” is the People that God gathers in the whole world. She exists in local communities and is made real as a liturgical,

⁷⁰ Father Scott is ordained in the Lefebvrist Society of St. Pius X.

⁷¹ Father Peter Scott in “How are Catholics to respond to the present crisis in the Church?” http://www.sspcx.org/miscellaneous/how_catholics_respond_present_crisis.htm Accessed 2010/06/15.

above all a Eucharistic, assembly. She draws her life from the word and the Body of Christ and so herself becomes Christ's Body.

Thus the *CCC* attributes three "...different, but closely connected meanings" (Shannon 1995:40) to the term "church" in Christian usage.

What is most problematic for Reformed Baptists, more than the other two meanings, it is the understanding of the church as a liturgical, above all, Eucharistic assembly, in which the church "...is most fully itself as it shares the meal and offers with Christ the sacrifice which reconciles us with God" (Shannon 1995:41). In Catholicism the church as liturgical, above all Eucharistic, assembly manifests in the entire sacramental life of the church, with the Eucharist as its "source and summit".⁷² As *CCC* 1127 and 1128 make clear, in this sacramental life the sacraments are seen as efficacious, *ex opere operato*. In distinction to the Catholic Church, who recognises seven *sacraments*, the *1689 BCF* recognises only two, and understand and present these as *ordinances* rather than *sacraments*. Furthermore, in Catholic understanding, the presence of the seven sacraments is one of the constitutive elements of the church, whereas in Baptist ecclesiology the ordinances constitute one *mark* of a true church (alongside the faithful preaching of the Word and the faithful exercise of preventive and restorative church discipline).

The *1689 BCF*'s point of conflict with the Catholic understanding of the church as a Eucharistic assembly is not lodged in anything that is said explicitly in its chapter on ecclesiology. Its strikingly brief, two-paragraph chapter (chapter 28) entitled *Of Baptism and the Lord's Supper* does, however, stand in direct opposition to the understanding of the church as a liturgical, above all Eucharistic, assembly. The differences already begin to emerge in the title of the chapter. Samuel Waldron (1995:336) explains that in this chapter the five paragraphs of the Westminster Confession of Faith have been turned into two brief paragraphs and that these changes begin with the title of the chapter, which in the Westminster Confession reads, "Of the Sacraments" and in the *1689 BCF*, "Of Baptism⁷³ and the Lord's Supper". This change

⁷² In the words of *Lumen Gentium* 11. (All quotations from *Lumen Gentium* are from *The Documents of Vatican II*, Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1965). And also in the document on the liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 47. (See footnote to *CCC* 1324).

⁷³ The differences between the Baptist and Catholic views on baptism are well known (They differ with regard to the candidate, mode and efficacy of Baptism. Baptists do not baptise infants at all, whilst Catholics do. Secondly, Baptists baptise only by immersion, whilst Catholics also baptise by effusion. Thirdly, Catholics hold baptism to be efficacious, *ex opere operato*, whilst Baptists see it as merely of symbolical significance.) Because these differences

is significant. Waldron, in commenting on this significance, takes strong issue with the efficacy of the sacraments as part of the Catholic Eucharistic understanding of the church:

The great question raised by the absence of the word (sacrament) in the (*1689 Baptist*) Confession concerns the propriety of using this word. The answer depends on what we mean by it. If the term to us is associated with a superstitious sacramentalism which attributes saving efficacy to the sacraments, we should probably not use it (1998:338).

Here is a clear statement from a recognised authority on the *1689 BCF* that “sacramentalism which attributes saving efficacy to the sacraments”, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* clearly does, is “superstition”. The charge of superstition, even when it comes against the Catholic Church (as Eucharistic assembly) in so roundabout a way, is a serious one and marks one of the most important differences between the ecclesiologies of the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF*. The charge becomes more serious, and the divide that it creates more defined, when it is put in terms so directly aimed at Catholic ecclesiology as in Waldron’s comments on *1689 BCF* chapter 30 paragraph 4.

To quote this paragraph first:

The denial of the cup to the people,⁷⁴ the worshipping of the elements, the lifting up of the elements, the carrying of them about for the purpose of adoration, the reserving of them for any pretended religious use, are all contrary to the nature of the ordinance and to Christ’s intention in appointing it.

Under the strong heading “*Its (the Lord’s Supper’s) perverse celebration*”, Waldron comments as follows on this paragraph:

Five things are mentioned as characteristic of the perverse celebration of the Lord’s Supper by Roman Catholics: the denial of the cup to the people...; worshipping the elements, lifting them up, carrying them about for adoration and reserving them for any pretended religious use (1998:367).

The misconception repeated here that Catholics “worship” the elements, in the customary evangelical sense of worship, is an old and still all too common one among evangelicals. They do not, of course, and it is therefore a happy fact that the charge is found here only in Waldron’s commentary on the *1689 BCF* and not in the Confession itself. But other misconceptions with regard to the Catholic Faith are present in the *1689 BCF*. For instance, the very next paragraph of the *1689 BCF* in equally strong

also exist between Baptists and other evangelicals, without causing a serious divide between them, baptism, as such, will not be discussed in this thesis, except to say that it is the Catholic Church’s attributing to baptism salvific efficacy that Baptists take most serious issue with.

⁷⁴ This was true until the time of the Second Vatican Council. Waldron is writing in 1998, still seemingly unaware that this has changed.

terms, speaks against another aspect of the understanding of the Church as Eucharistic assembly, namely the aspect of the doctrine of transubstantiation:

The doctrine commonly called transubstantiation which maintains that in the supper the bread and wine is changed into the substance of Christ's body and blood through consecration by a priest or in any other way, is repugnant, not to Scripture alone, but even to common sense and reason. Furthermore, it overthrows the nature of the ordinance, and has been, and is, the cause of all kinds of superstitions and gross idolatries.

The appeal to common sense is surprising here, in the light of the fact that the same appeal has often been brought against fundamental doctrines of the Faith, such as the Trinity and the Hypostatic Union, which doctrines the *1689 BCF* happily affirms together with Catholics. "Repugnant to scripture" seems somewhat of an overstatement of an otherwise quite understandable case of disagreement on the correct interpretation of certain texts. Throughout history, Catholic exegetes have taken great pains to indicate how, as they see things, the Real Presence and transubstantiation is firmly rooted in Scripture.⁷⁵ It is a happy fact, therefore, that the *Sola 5* Confession, in its statement on the Lord's Supper (para. 7.8) does not speak on these matters in the same terms as the *1689 BCF* does.

These comparisons and remarks suffice to indicate precisely how opposed the *1689 BCF* is to central aspects of the *CCC*'s understanding of the Church as a Eucharistic assembly, and with everything implicit in that understanding. Differences in understanding of what it means that the church is universal as well as local come across in less emotive⁷⁶ terms and will be examined in the next section. First, how the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF* agree and differ on what the constitutive elements of the true church are and how the true church is constituted according to each must be examined.

4.3 The Constitution of the Church.

The Christian church is the only divinely organised society among ... (humanity)" (Hiscox n.d.:44). The following section will discuss how this divinely organised society is constituted according to the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF* respectively.

⁷⁵ This thesis cannot digress into a discussion of this matter here. But for a good example of how modern Catholic apologists have engaged evangelicals on this matter, see Keating, Karl. *Catholicism and Fundamentalism. The Attack on "Romanism" by "Bible Christians"*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998, pp. 246-258.

⁷⁶ It must be kept in mind that the *1689 BCF* comes from an era when persecution was still fresh in the memory of many Protestants in general and Baptists in particular, which, perhaps, at least partially accounts for these emotive terms.

The term “constitution” holds more than one meaning, of course. By the constitution of the church can be meant:

- That which establishes the church as the church;
- The principles by which the church is governed and, consequently, functions structurally;
- In the case of Protestant churches, a statute embodying the principles on which a particular church is governed.

The third meaning is not in view here. The first two meanings are interrelated. In order for the true church to remain the true church those constitutive elements that establish the church as the true church must be preserved in the government and structural functioning of the church. This involves also authority in the church and church government. Both these senses of “constitution” are in view here and what follows is therefore a discussion of the constitutive elements and structural functioning of the church, including authority in the church and the proper form of church government according to the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF* respectively.

Hans Küng (1967:413) issues a reminder that “...(t)he question of the constitution of the church is a special area of difficulty” and any discussion of the same should therefore proceed with caution. Proceeding with due caution, it is nevertheless true that the differences between how the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF* understand the constitution of the church are stark enough for these to be readily identified and discussed. But first an important agreement must be pointed out. The agreement is with regard to the first sense of “constitution”, namely that which establishes the church as the church.

4.3.1 An Important Agreement.

Paragraph 2 of *Lumen Gentium* reads as follows:

Already from the beginning of the world the foreshadowing of the Church took place. It was prepared in a remarkable way throughout the history of the people of Israel and by means of the Old Covenant. In the present era of time the Church was constituted and by the Holy Spirit was made manifest.

This paragraph, loudly echoed in several of its aspects in the *CCC* (759) firmly establishes the time of the constitution of the church “in the present era”, that is, in the era of the New Covenant. Reformed Baptist Samuel Waldron (2004:5) is in agreement

with this. He goes further, in fact, calling the New Covenant *the* constitution of the church, meaning thereby that:

(W)hat the Constitution of the United States is to our country, what the *Magna Carta* is to the British Commonwealth, that the New Covenant is to the Church of Christ.

There is a strong implication in these paragraphs from *Lumen Gentium* and the *CCC* that the Church is constituted in the world as the new Israel. The *CCC* (759 and 762) confirms this constitution in even clearer terms. Although this truth is stated nowhere in the *1689 BCF* in terms as clear as in the *CCC*, Waldron (1989:313), in his exposition of the *1689 BCF* states that:

... Israel was a type of the church (Rom. 2:28-29; 1 Cor. 10:18; Gal. 6:16; Phil. 3:3) and ... the church is the new Israel of God and the fulfilment of prophecy (Acts 2:16; 15:14-18; 1 Cor. 10:11; Gal. 6:16; Eph. 2:12-19; Heb. 8:7-13).

Thus Waldron agrees with the *CCC* and *Lumen Gentium* that the church is the new Israel of God. This is an important agreement, yet one that Waldron, as a Baptist, is careful to not take too far. He adds the following disclaimer to the above statement:

... (I)t is true that the church did not exist in the Old Testament. These truths contradict the tendency of some strains of covenant theology⁷⁷ to flatten the difference between the church and Israel in the interests of paedobaptism (1989:313).

Apart from this disclaimer, there is agreement between the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF* (or Waldron's presentation of it, at least) that the church is the new Israel of God. In fact, there is greater agreement here between Reformed Baptists and Catholics than there is between Reformed Baptists and those Evangelicals who maintain a strict dichotomy between Old Testament Israel and the church.⁷⁸

It is apparent, then, that the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF* agree that it is the New Covenant that establishes the church as the church and that the church is the Israel of the New Covenant.

The constitution of the church in the second sense of the term will now be discussed, first from the perspective of the *1689 BCF* and thereafter from the perspective of the *CCC*.

⁷⁷ Among whom Waldron would reckon Catholicism.

⁷⁸ Dispensationalist Evangelicals maintain a strict dichotomy between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament Church and hold that all unfulfilled prophecy regarding Israel in the Old Testament is yet to be fulfilled in literal Israel in the future. They deny that any of these prophecies were or can be fulfilled in a spiritual way in the church.

4.3.2 The Constitution of the Church According to the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith.

Reformed Baptist ecclesiology is in an important sense at least partly a derivative of Anabaptist ecclesiology. It represents a conscious effort to identify the early, or original constitution of the church and then to adhere to it closely. It is therefore not surprising that the emphasis in the Reformed Baptist understanding of the church is on the local congregation rather than on the universal church. This is immediately clear even from a cursory reading of the chapter on the church in the *1689 BCF*.

Waldron's analysis of the *1689 BCF* is masterly and especially so his analysis of the chapter on the church. He indicates how the chapter divides into two main parts dealing with the universal church (paragraphs 1-4) and the local church (paragraphs 5-15). This reveals that most (more than two thirds) of what the *1689 BCF* has to say on the church has reference to the local church- it speaks on the local church in more than twice as many paragraphs as on the universal church. This is not surprising, given the fact that Baptists are Congregationalist in their ecclesiology. In fact, as Waldron (1989:311) readily acknowledges:

The ideas found in this chapter (on the Church, in the *1689 BCF*) are ... not exclusively those of Baptists, but ideas advocated by such Congregationalist Puritans as Thomas Goodwin, John Owen, John Cotton and Jonathan Edwards. Only the idea of placing them in the Confession is unique to Baptists.

The *1689 BCF*'s understanding of the constitution of the church is stated most comprehensively in paragraphs 7 and 14 of the *1689 BCF*:

A particular church, gathered and completely organised according to the mind of Christ, consists of officers and members, and the officers appointed by Christ to be chosen and set apart by the church (so-called and gathered), for the peculiar administration of ordinances and execution of power or duty, which he entrusts them with, or calls them to, to be continued to the end of the world, are bishops or elders and deacons (Paragraph 7).

And paragraph 14:

And each church and the members of it are bound to pray continually for the good of and prosperity of all the churches of Christ, in all places and upon all occasions to further every one within the bounds of their places and callings, in the exercise of their gifts and graces, so the churches, when planted by the providence of God, so as they may enjoy opportunity and advantage for it, ought to hold communion among themselves, for their peace, increase of love and mutual edification.

Here, in two very simple statements is all that the *1689 BCF* really has to say on the constitution of the church. Significantly, towards the principle of *Sola Scriptura*, each paragraph is footnoted by relevant Scripture references and by that only. According to the *1689 BCF*, then, the New Covenant constitutes the church, as the new Israel. The church is, quite simply, structured congregationally in autonomous congregations overseen by elected elders and deacons (paragraphs 5-15), the various local churches co-operating and fraternising in voluntary association with one another (paragraphs 14-15). There is no visible, global structure, especially not a hierarchical one.

This stands in stark distinction from the constitution of the Church as set out in the *CCC*, which will now be considered.

4.3.3 The Constitution of the Church According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

The *CCC* does not deny the significance of local congregations. It clearly asserts in paragraph 752 that “(The Church) ... exists in local communities” In the words of Michael Pennock (1998:115), “... (f)or most Catholics, the local Parish is where we experience church.” On this point the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF* are in agreement. A rift begins to develop soon, however, as the *CCC* goes on to say in the same sentence that this church, which exists in local communities, is “... a liturgical, above all a Eucharistic, assembly.” The understanding of the Church as a Eucharistic assembly is present in Ratzinger’s (1996:79) understanding of the constitution of the church when he says that “...(a) church “understood eucharistically is a church constituted episcopally”. Indeed, this episcopal constitution is hierarchical and is described in *CCC* 874 – 896. The key statement, taken from *Lumen Gentium*, is in *CCC* 880:

When Christ instituted the Church, “he constituted [them] in the form of a college or permanent assembly, at the head of which he placed Peter, chosen from among them (LG 19)”. Just as by “the Lord’s institution, Peter and the rest of the apostles constitute a single apostolic college, so in like fashion the Roman Pontiff, Peter’s successor, and the bishops are related with and united to one another (LG 22)”.

If a church eucharistically understood is a church episcopally constituted (as the *CCC* confirms), it follows that because Reformed Baptist churches are neither eucharistically understood nor (therefore) episcopally constituted, they are not, from a Catholic perspective, properly constituted churches.

Another important statement in the *CCC* on how the Church is constituted is found in 765:

The Lord Jesus endowed his community with a structure that will remain until the Kingdom is fully achieved. Before all else there is the choice of the Twelve with Peter as their head.

This is an important statement. It states the Petrine principle. It is to be noted carefully that the Petrine principle is stated as “before all else” in the structure of the church.

One more paragraph in the *CCC* is of great importance with regard to the constitution of the church. It is in 816 and is, again, taken from *Lumen Gentium* (para. 8. p 16):

... (The) Church, constituted and organised in the world 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.

We have then, before all else in the *CCC*'s understanding of the constitution of the church, the Petrine principle and, flowing from this, episcopal succession through the sacrament of Holy Orders (the entire Article 6), and the Eucharist as vital constitutive elements of the church. Protestant churches⁷⁹, including (or perhaps especially) Reformed Baptist churches lack these elements, of course. In fact, against the Petrine principle and hierarchy the *1689 BCF* contends strongly in its paragraph 4, and against the Eucharist in its entire chapter 30.

The Eucharist is at the pinnacle of the Catholic sacramental system. The seven sacraments are among the constitutive elements of the church. In its taking issue with the Catholic view of the Eucharist, and in recognising only two ordinances, the *1689 BCF* places itself in serious disagreement with the *CCC* with regard to the constitution of the church.

An important question now arises from both points of view. From the Catholic point of view the question is: Can Reformed Baptist churches, which not only lack, but strongly contend against what the *CCC* considers vital constitutive elements of the church, be considered true churches? To be sure, the *CCC* (819), again following *Lumen Gentium*, recognises that these churches, along with others, contain many elements of sanctification and of truth:

⁷⁹ The Anglican Communion does accept Orders and the Eucharist as constitutive elements of the Church. The problem is that some situate Anglicans amongst Protestantism and others (Anglicans and others) do not.

... (M)any elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside of the visible confines of the Catholic Church: “the written Word of God; the life of grace; faith, hope, and charity, with the other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit, as well as visible elements.” Christ’s Spirit uses these Churches and ecclesial communities⁸⁰ as means of salvation, whose power derives from the fullness of grace and truth that Christ has entrusted to the Catholic Church.

Despite this accommodating acknowledgement, Reformed Baptist churches, structured along the *1689 BCF*’s clear rejection of the sacraments and the Catholic ecclesiastical government, including its visible structure with the Pope at its helm, cannot, from the CCC’s point of view, be said to be *fully* incorporated into the society of the church.

CCC 837, once again quoting *Lumen Gentium*, clearly states:

Fully incorporated into the society of the Church are those who, possessing the Spirit of Christ, accept all the means of salvation given to the Church together with her entire organization, and who – by ... the sacraments, ecclesiastical government, and communion are joined in the visible structure of the Church of Christ, who rules her through the Supreme Pontiff and the bishops. ...

It is furthermore clear that Reformed Baptist churches, from a Catholic point of view lack the visible bonds of communion with the Catholic Church, as CCC 815 identifies these:

- ... (T)he unity of the pilgrim church is also assured by visible bonds of communion: ...
- (and by) common celebration of divine worship, especially of the sacraments;
- (and by) apostolic succession through the sacrament of Holy orders, maintaining the fraternal concord of God’s family.

Indeed, in recent times, William Cardinal Levada, Prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith released a document entitled *Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church*.⁸¹ This document re-emphasised *Dominus Iesus* (see footnote 12) and the distinction it makes between “churches” and “ecclesial communities”. The divide created between Catholics and Reformed Baptists by the disagreements on what constitutes the church has been

⁸⁰ It must be pointed out that for its lack of episcopacy, the Reformed Baptist congregations would fall in the category of “ecclesial communities” rather than “Churches”. *Dominus Iesus* a document published by the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith in 2000 (while Ratzinger was still its Prefect) emphasised this distinction. There was also a more recent 2007 document from Rome entitled “*Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church*.” This document re-emphasised *Dominus Iesus* and caused a great deal of ecumenical consternation, (as did *Dominus Iesus* when it was released).

⁸¹ The document is on the Vatican website at:

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20070629_responsa-questiones_en.html

widened and deepened by this statement. It declares non-Eucharistic Christian assemblies (which include the Reformed Baptist congregations) to be “ecclesial communities” rather than churches. The fifth question and answer in this document read as follows:

FIFTH QUESTION

Why do the texts of the Council and those of the Magisterium since the Council not use the title of “Church” with regard to those Christian Communities born out of the Reformation of the sixteenth century?

RESPONSE

According to Catholic doctrine, these Communities do not enjoy apostolic succession in the sacrament of Orders, and are, therefore, deprived of a constitutive element of the Church. These ecclesial Communities which, specifically because of the absence of the sacramental priesthood, have not preserved the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic Mystery cannot, according to Catholic doctrine, be called “Churches” in the proper sense.⁸²

Thus this document clearly states that Protestant churches, (which, naturally, include Reformed Baptist churches) cannot be considered proper churches, but are “ecclesial communities.” This document sheds light on the Vatican’s own understanding of a number of aspects of Roman Catholic ecclesiology that have been rather hazy since Vatican II. It seems valid to say that, the present Pope being one of the major architects of the *CCC*, the release of these comments from the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith during his papacy furnishes us with some vital interpretations of the ecclesiology of the *CCC* from the perspective of one of its major architects.

From the Reformed Baptist point of view the question is likewise whether the Roman Catholic Church can be considered a true church. The matter is clear. The scathing paragraph 4 of Chapter 26 of the *1689 BCF*, quoted earlier in the introduction to this thesis, still stands in its fierce condemnation of the papacy, and consequently, of the hierarchical constitution of the Catholic Church:

It is impossible for the Pope of Rome in any true sense to be the head of the church, for he is the antichrist, described in Scripture, as ‘the man of sin’, ‘the son of perdition’ who ‘exalts himself’ in the church against Christ and ‘above all that is called God’, whom ‘the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of His coming’.

⁸² See footnote 81.

Peter Masters⁸³ (1981:43) points out that many regard this statement in the *1689 BCF* as “the only debatable statement.” But then he nevertheless reveals, in an even more scathing statement, how this is not rooted in a softening of attitudes towards the Roman Catholic Church:

There is no disagreement among ... (those who consider the above statement debatable) as to the heresy and darkness of the Church of Rome, nor of its instrumentality as a tool of Satan down the ages. The papal system⁸⁴ is certainly utterly anti-Christian in spirit, form and effect.

It is to be hoped that this is just the view of one individual. It does seem, however, to reflect a more widespread Reformed Baptist sentiment against the way the Catholic Church is constituted.

4.4 Conclusion.

It is a welcome fact that there are some important agreements between how Catholics and Reformed Baptists understand the concept “church” and that the church is constituted in the New Covenant. Stark differences remain, however. Mark Noll and Carolyn Nystrom (2005:234) make a succinct statement as to what, in the main, distinguishes Reformed Baptists (as evangelicals) and Catholics in the way they understand the constitution of the church: “For Catholics, the Church constitutes believers; for evangelicals, believers constitute the Church. For Catholics, individual believers are a function of the Church; for evangelicals, the Church is a function of individual believers.”

According to the *CCC* the church is understood Eucharistically (with the Eucharist at the centre of the sacraments) and constituted episcopally with the Pope as its head. Although it recognises that there are elements of grace and truth in Reformed Baptist churches, it nevertheless considers these to be ecclesial communities, and not as churches in the true sense of the term.

In clearly stated opposition to this, the *1689 BCF* affirms the church as organised and structured congregationally in autonomous congregations overseen by elected elders and deacons, with no succession, and the various local churches co-operating and fraternising in voluntary association with one another, around two ordinances.

⁸³ Dr. Peter Masters, one of the most respected Reformed Baptists in the world today has been the pastor of Metropolitan Tabernacle in London for the past almost three decades. He therefore holds the pulpit of the famous Charles Spurgeon.

⁸⁴ Here we have a strong statement against the Catholic view of the constitution of the church.

In the light of these stark differences it is not difficult to see what Noll and Nystrom (2005:233) mean when they say that “(t)he Church ... (is) the crux of Catholic-Evangelical disagreement.”

The next chapter will consider the characteristics of the church, as understood by Catholics and Reformed Baptists respectively.

Chapter Five The Characteristics, or Attributes of the Church

This chapter will discuss the differences between the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF* with respect to the characteristics, or attributes, of the church. These are the unity, sanctity, catholicity and apostolicity of the church. Rather than discuss the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF* in turn with regard to the perspective of each on the attributes of the church, the points of agreement and conflict between the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF* on each one of the attributes will be discussed and contrasted with reference to each attribute in turn. The section on the catholicity of the church includes a discussion of who is part of the church according to the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF*.

As it does in its analysis of all the articles setting out the *lex credendi*, the *CCC*, in its treatment of the church, follows the Apostles Creed, elaborated by the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. In doing so, the *CCC* identifies four characteristics or essential features of the church: unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity. Following *Lumen Gentium* 8, *CCC* 811 states:

This is the sole Church of Christ, which in the creed we profess to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic.”⁸⁵ These four characteristics, inseparably linked with each other, indicate essential features of the Church and her mission. The Church does not possess them of herself; it is Christ who, through the Holy Spirit, makes the Church one, holy, catholic and apostolic, and it is he who calls her to realise each one of these qualities.

It is notable how the *CCC* affirms the church with these marks as the *sole* Church of Christ. In other words, no “church” without these marks can also be the church. Of these four features of the church, the *1689 BCF* mentions and describes, in those terms, only the catholicity of the church (*1689 BCF* 26:1). It mentions aspects of holiness in 26:2 and 3, differing from the *CCC* in how these attributes are understood, and taking strong issue with apostolicity as the *CCC* understands it.

The points of agreement and conflict between the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF* on each one of these attributes will now be discussed.

⁸⁵ *Lumen Gentium* 8.

5.1 The Unity of the Church.

From the Catholic perspective, the unity of the Church has two facets. First, there is the inner bond of love, which “binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Col. 3:14b). Then there are also visible bonds: the profession of one faith handed down from the apostles, the common celebration of the sacraments and the apostolic succession of the ordained ministry. Reformed Baptists would affirm unity through the inner bond of love yet disagree strongly with the sacraments as understood by Catholics and the apostolic succession of the ordained ministry as visible bonds of unity.

In fact, whilst the *CCC* explicitly and elaborately affirms the unity of the Church, the *1689 BCF* does not even mention it specifically. Only a single statement in *1689 BFC* (28:14) contains something that may, at a stretch, implicitly refer to unity as something to be expressed among the various local churches in “...communion among themselves, for their peace, increase and love, for mutual edification.” But even this statement cannot really be seen as speaking to the unity of the church specifically. It speaks, rather, according to Waldron’s (1998:311) outline, to the divine warrant towards the fraternal relations and communion of local churches. Therefore, like most evangelicals, Reformed Baptists seem to have a rather soft view of the unity of the church, in the sense that it sees unity as little more than a certain spiritual, internal unity observable, if at all, only in a common confession of certain fundamental soteriological convictions and communal relations between those of such common soteriological convictions. This view makes it possible to bluntly deny even the possibility of disunity. Richard D. Phillips⁸⁶ (2001:26) does so in no uncertain terms when he argues that:

...(W)e hear today a constant cry against the “problem” of Christian division. Roman Catholic apologists use this as one of their main arguments against the Reformation and its doctrine of scripture alone. ...What are we to make of this matter? I think the best answer ... is not to solve the problem of Christian unity (sic!) but to deny its existence. ... (A)ccording to Paul the church is already united. He says, “There is one body and one Spirit” (Eph. 4:4). Not that there *ought* to be one body, but that there *is* one body, one unified church. We are not exhorted to “create” unity among Christians, but to maintain it, that is, to serve and promote the unity that is already a fact (Eph. 4:3).

This is a strange argument. By such reasoning, schism in the church is not a real possibility, because as soon as a church denies any one of the fundamental tenets of

⁸⁶ A Presbyterian who works in close association with such notable Reformed Baptists as Mark Dever, who wrote one of the chapters in the work from which Phillips is quoted here.

evangelical soteriology, it simply ceases to be a church in the true sense of the term. Needless to say, this makes ecumenical endeavours towards unity redundant.

Indication of the sparse attention given to the unity of a universal, visible church by the *1689 BCF* is found in the fact, already pointed out, that of the fifteen paragraphs in its chapter on the church, only four speak on the universal church. Ten paragraphs speak exclusively of the local church and the relations between local churches. This indicates that in Reformed Baptist thinking the unity of the church is an invisible, spiritual reality - something to be acknowledged rather than something to be attained and maintained.

In contrast to this, the *CCC* describes a rather more precise, defined, external and visible unity that emanates from the Trinity (*CCC* 813), and that has suffered many wounds. Unity is established by three bonds (*CCC* 814), namely the profession of one faith (publicly confessed in the creed), worship (expressed in the liturgy, especially through the sacraments) and government (expressed in the apostolic succession of the episcopal hierarchy, with the Pope as supreme Pontiff). On this last bond of unity *CCC* 816 (quoting *Lumen Gentium* 8) makes clear that this sole church of Christ was entrusted to Peter and the apostles and that “(t)his Church, constituted and organized as a society in the present world, subsists in the Catholic Church which is governed by the successor of Peter and the bishops in communion with him”. In addition to this, *CCC* 881 (quoted in full in the introduction to this thesis) states that “(t)he *Pope*, Bishop of Rome and Peter’s successor is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and the whole company of the faithful.” This statement and *1689 BCF* 26:4 (also quoted in the introduction) face each other with swords crossed.

At the same time, as *CCC* 814 acknowledges, the church is also marked by a great diversity of peoples, cultures, conditions, ways of life, gifts and traditions. With this the *1689 BCF* has no quarrel.

The *1689 BCF* does quarrel, though, with the *CCC*, when it once again follows *Lumen Gentium* in its claim (*CCC* 816) that the sole church of Christ subsists⁸⁷ in the Catholic Church:

⁸⁷ There is an ongoing discussion in and outside of the Catholic Church as to how, precisely, *subsists in* is to be understood. The correct meaning of *subsists in* affects the definition of the church and how the Catholic Church understands itself. Some understand the phrase to mean, in a narrower sense, that the Church of Christ is the Catholic

“The sole Church of Christ [is that] which our Savior, after his Resurrection, entrusted to Peter’s pastoral care, commissioning him and the other apostles to extend and rule it. ... This Church, ... subsists in the Catholic Church”

However one may understand the much debated expression “subsists in”, Reformed Baptists would contend with the assertion, as is clear from, for instance, Masters’ strong statement quoted above in 4.3.1. In the gracious tone of *Unitatis Redintegratio* the CCC (817) describes such contention as “wounds to unity” (CCC 817):

In fact ‘in this one and only Church of God from its very beginnings there arose certain rifts, which the Apostle strongly censures as damnable. But in subsequent centuries much more serious dissensions appeared and large communities⁸⁸ became separated from full communion with the Catholic Church – for which, often enough, men of both sides were to blame.’ The ruptures that wound the unity of the church ... do not occur without human sin.

And such sin that wounds the unity of the church the CCC humbly recognises on both sides. It seems naïve to await an equal acknowledgement from those who deny the possibility even of division and who view separation from the Catholic Church as little more than a necessary separation from “the heresy and darkness of the Church of Rome, and of ... its instrumentality as a tool of Satan down the ages” ... (and) ... “(t)he papal system ... (as) ... utterly anti-Christian in spirit, form and effect” (Masters 1981:43). Those who hold so harsh a view would probably include all but a few exceptions among Reformed Baptists. Furthermore, it does not seem realistic to await similar gracious acknowledgement of the Catholic Church that the CCC, once again citing *Unitatis Redintegratio* gives to Protestant churches (including Reformed Baptist churches) in paragraph 818:

However, one cannot charge with the sin of separation those who at present are born into these communities (that resulted from such separation) and in them are brought up in the faith of Christ, and the Catholic Church accepts them with respect and affection as brothers.

Such acceptance of Catholics as brothers and sisters by Reformed Baptists is lacking when judged by pronouncements such as those of Masters, quoted above.

Church only, whilst others understand it in a more ecumenical sense to mean that the church of Christ is centered in, yet broader than the Catholic Church.

⁸⁸ There can be little doubt that the churches of the Reformation are also in focus here.

To summarize the *CCC*'s statement on the unity of the church, its own customary "In Brief" statement⁸⁹ is quoted in full:

The church is one: she acknowledges one Lord, confesses one faith, is born of one Baptism, forms only one Body, is given life by the one Spirit, for the sake of one hope (cf. Eph. 4:3-5) at which fulfilment all divisions will be overcome (*CCC* 866).

The *1689 BCF* is in full accord with this statement. However, when judged by Masters' statements, Reformed Baptists do not reciprocate the *CCC*'s acceptance of them as part of that one Body. That is where a difference, devastating to unity, lies. Who is, and who is not included in the church will be discussed in more detail when the catholicity of the church comes under consideration.

The holiness of the church is the next characteristic of the church that must be considered.

5.2 The Holiness of the Church.

The holiness of the church is described in nine paragraphs of the *CCC* (823-829). In brief, the *CCC* affirms, in paragraphs 823-827, that the church is unfailingly holy because Christ loved the church as his bride, gave himself up for her, and has given her the Holy Spirit. It is because of this holiness that the New Testament, in many places, calls her members "saints". It is through her union with Christ that the church is sanctified by Christ and becomes sanctifying with him and through him. Through the fullness of the means of salvation that has been deposited in the church her members acquire holiness in her. The holiness of the church on earth is real though imperfect. Roman Catholics affirm the holiness of the church in the holiness of its dogmas, its moral precepts, its worship and its discipline. Protestants (including Reformed Baptists) locate it in the members of the church as holy in Christ and as holy in principle, in the possession of the new life, which is destined for perfect holiness (Berkhof 1939:141).

The *1689 BCF* agrees, in a sense, and only in a sense, that the holiness of the church on earth is real though imperfect when it states in chapter 26 paragraph 3: "The purest churches under heaven are subject to mixture and error...". It also agrees that "(t)he members of these churches are saints by calling..." (chapter 26, paragraph 6). Apart

⁸⁹ The *CCC* summarizes each of its paragraphs in an "In Brief" statement. Tillard (1994:179) cautions that these résumés of paragraphs of the *CCC* are "... frequently inaccurate summaries of their contents, which is a dangerous procedure." This is true, but not the case in *CCC* 866-870.

from these two statements, the *1689 BCF* chapter on the church is starkly silent on the holiness of the church. It does speak on the sanctification of the individual Christian in a separate chapter (13). This fact indicates how Reformed Baptists locate holiness, not in the church, but in the members of the church as holy in Christ and as holy in principle, in the possession of the new life, which is destined for perfect holiness.

There is nothing, however, in the *1689 BCF* that comes close to affirming what the *CCC* (828) affirms, namely that “... some of the faithful ... practiced heroic virtue and lived in fidelity to God’s grace to the point that such a special category of saint can be proposed to believers “... as models and intercessors.” The *1689 BCF* nowhere specifically takes issue with the matter of canonization, yet it certainly has no place for the notion anywhere in its thinking. In a comment on the *1689 BCF*’s chapter on sanctification, Waldron (1989:175) obviously contends against the whole idea of canonization when he says: “... all God’s people are saints, not just a select few”

The *CCC*’s final paragraph on the holiness of the church (829) presents the Virgin Mary as the one in whom “... the Church has already reached that perfection whereby she exists without spot or wrinkle” and in whom “... the Church is already the ‘all-holy’.” Needless to say, while the *1689 BCF* nowhere directly confronts this view, Reformed Baptists, in tandem with other Evangelicals, are averse to the Marian doctrines, also as far as her sanctity is concerned.

Since the *1689 BCF* is largely silent on the holiness of the church and refers mainly to the holiness of the members of the church, there are no directly stated points of conflict between it and the *CCC* on the matter. The only points of contention may arise with regard to canonization and the sanctity of the Virgin Mary. Such points of contention will be between the *CCC*’s chapter on the holiness of the Church and the *1689 BCF*’s chapter on sanctification and therefore are not part of their statements on ecclesiology.

The summary of this section commences again with the *CCC*’s very succinct “In Brief” statement:

The Church is holy: the most holy God is her author; Christ her bridegroom, gave himself up to make her holy; the Spirit of holiness gives her life. Since she still includes sinners, she is “the sinless one made up of sinners.” Her holiness shines in the saints; in Mary she is already all-holy (*CCC* 867).

An encouraging measure of agreement between the two documents is readily recognised here. Nothing in the *1689 BCF* disagrees or is even uncomfortable with anything in the above statement, until the very last composite sentence: “Her holiness shines in the saints; in Mary she is already all-holy.” Reformed Baptists have a different understanding to Catholics as to who “the saints” are; they simply see all believers as saints and make no room for a special category of saint such as that described in *CCC* 828. Furthermore, they certainly do not see the church as “already all-holy in Mary”. But this is the only point of conflict between the two documents with regard to the holiness of the church.

The catholicity of the church will now be discussed.

5.3 The Catholicity of the Church.

The *1689 BFC*'s chapter on the church begins with the words “The catholic or universal church...”. By “catholic” it means something quite different from the meaning the term holds in Roman Catholic thinking. Since the Reformation there have been many contentions between Catholics and Protestants on the true meaning of the term “catholic”. The word comes from the Greek word *katholikos* which means (according to Dever 2004:69) “whole, entire, complete, general, universal”. By “catholic” the *1689 BCF* means simply “universal”, nothing more, nothing less. Waldron (1989:312) bluntly states: “When we speak of the catholic church, we mean the universal church”. As it does on other things, the *CCC* (830-831) speaks on the concept “catholic” with far greater eloquence and profundity than does the *1689 BCF*. In so doing it shows the concept to be far richer than the *1689 BCF* (or Waldron) seems to realise:

The Church is catholic in a double sense: First, the church is catholic because Christ is present in her. ... In her subsists the fullness of Christ's body united with its head. ... Secondly, the Church is catholic because she has been sent out by Christ on a mission to the whole of the human race.

The next four sections of the *CCC* make clear that each particular church is catholic and they state how this is so. Reformed Baptists, in sometimes referring to the Baptist principle of the autonomy of the local church as the “completeness” of the local church, affirm something very similar to what the *CCC* has to say with regard to the catholicity of each particular church. However, they would take immediate and strong issue with *CCC* 834, which states:

Particular churches are fully catholic through the communion with one of them, the Church of Rome “which presides in charity.” For with this church, by reason of its pre-eminence, the whole Church, that is the faithful everywhere, must necessarily be in accord.

This statement clashes with the Baptist principle of the autonomy of the local church. This Baptist principle was never intended to promote absolute autonomy, but it most certainly does intend to ensure independence of the church from state control, and independence of local churches from any outside control, even from another church. It would therefore undoubtedly contend against the idea that any one particular church presides, even in charity, over the rest of them, or against one church having pre-eminence over the rest in a way that warrants accordance to that one pre-eminent church from the faithful everywhere. The Baptist principle of the autonomy of the local church⁹⁰ is stated in the *1689 BCF* in terms clear enough to preclude any such notion:

To each of these churches thus gathered, according to his mind declared in his Word, he hath given all that power and authority, which is in any way needful for their carrying on that order in worship and discipline, which he hath instituted for them to observe; with commands and rules for the due and right exerting and executing of that power (*1689 BCF* chapter 26, paragraph 7).

It is clear that the *1689 BCF* places its emphasis on the local church. This is not to say that it does not foster a high view of the universal church. The way in which it counters Landmarkism⁹¹ is a good indication of the high view of the universal church held by the *1689 BCF*. Landmarkism denies that there is such a thing as the universal church and recognises the local church only. The *1689 BCF* militates against this view. Waldron (1989:312), in his commentary on the *1689 BCF*⁹² comments as follows:

Does the Bible teach that there is a universal church? The New Testament uses the word “church” 115 times. Most of the occurrences do not, in fact, refer to the universal church, but to a local church or churches (2 Cor. 8:23-24; Gal. 1:2). The New Testament does speak of a universal church (Mat. 16:18, 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 1:22; 4:11-15; 5:23-25, 27, 29, 32; Col. 1:18, 24; Heb. 12:23).

Such passages refute Landmarkism and its denial of the universal church.

Concerning the reality of a universal church as well as the local church, then, the *1689 BCF* and the *CCC* are in agreement. They differ, however in the priority that is ascribed to each. The emphasis that the *1689 BCF* gives to the local church can be seen as an

⁹⁰ In his commentary on the *1689 BCF* Waldron (1984:307) prefers to refer to the principle as the complete sufficiency of the power of the local church.

⁹¹ See footnote 42.

⁹² The only commentary on the *1689 BCF*, in fact.

indication that it seems to regard the local church, to borrow and invert a phrase from Ratzinger⁹³ (Allan 2000:306), as “ontologically prior” to the universal church, and the universal church as little more than the sum of local churches. The *CCC*, seemingly following Ratzinger, disagrees.

The relationship between the universal church and the local (or “particular”) church is precisely one of those aspects of ecclesiology in which Ratzinger, in the perspective of the more progressive component of Catholic theologians, has been going in the wrong direction. Given Ratzinger’s influence on the *CCC* it would therefore not be surprising to find the *CCC* either stating the logical end of that direction, or at least giving impetus to its thrust. What is that direction? As Allen points out, “(u)nder Ratzinger’s influence, a Platonic conception of church has dominated (Pope John Paul II’s) pontificate” (2000:306). A 1992 document from the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith (of which Ratzinger was the Prefect at the time), entitled “*Some aspects of the church as communion*” contains, in Allen’s (2000:306) words “the key line” to this Platonic conception, namely that: “(The universal church) is a reality ontologically and temporally prior to every individual particular church”. Allen (2000:307) argues that the weakness of this argument was exposed through a simple question from Nathan Mitchell, a liturgist at the University of Notre Dame. The question is: “Who belongs to it?”.

This, at first glance, does seem a very damaging question. However, two things may be said in reply to Allen and Mitchell. The first has to do with Pope Benedict XVI’s methodology. His approach to defining theological concepts is indeed philosophical, or, more precisely, biblical-philological, as opposed to the more empirical-dynamic⁹⁴ approach of progressive theologians. Pope Benedict XVI’s methodology is, therefore, by its very nature basically deductive and definitively Platonic. Baptist theologian Millard Erickson explains how such a methodology operates, when applied to ecclesiology: In a philosophical approach...one begins by formulating a definition of the ideal Church and then moves from this pure, fixed essence to concrete instances, which are but imperfect copies or shadows (1998:1039).

⁹³ Ratzinger asserts that the universal church is ontologically prior to the local church (Allan 2000:306). This assertion is discussed in more detail a little later.

⁹⁴ Both the term “empirical-dynamic” and “biblical-philological” are from Millard Erickson (2005:1038-1041).

However much may be said *against* Pope Benedict XVI's methodology in preference of other methodologies (each with its own philosophical bias, of course), there remains something important to be said *for* it. For one thing, his approach, more than some others, thinks about the church in terms of its essence, in a way that, as will be argued in a moment, Scripture itself does. Neither a discussion of methodology in general, nor, in particular, absolving Ratzinger of charges of allowing Platonic Idealism to shape (or distort) Catholic ecclesiology is within the scope of this thesis. But, to turn to the second point that may be made in reply to Allen's criticism: this criticism is not uncommon and is answered very adequately by Millard Erickson⁹⁵:

At this point⁹⁶ some people might accuse theologians of adopting a Platonic perspective, whereby local churches are regarded as instantiations⁹⁷ or concrete particular manifestations of the pure Form, the abstract Idea, of church. Note however, that theologians⁹⁸ are not reading this concept into the Bible. The concept is actually present in the thought of Paul and Luke. It is not introduced by their interpreters. There is on this one point a genuine parallel between biblical thought and that of Plato. This is neither good nor bad, and should not be considered an indication of Platonic influence upon the Bible. It is simply a fact (1998:1044)

Ratzinger's statement, then, that the universal church is ontologically and temporally prior to every particular church, is not as readily refuted as Allan and Mitchell pretend. But it is a statement with which Reformed Baptists, with their great emphasis on the local church and the autonomy of the local church, will show at least a measure of unease.

One more question regarding the church's catholicity needs to be considered, namely: who, then, belongs to the Catholic Church? This question is dealt with in a cursory manner in the earlier discussion on the unity of the church. It now calls for closer examination because the *CCC* (836-838) asks the question very pertinently in its treatment of the catholicity of the church. Peter Kreeft (2001:114), in his work *Catholic Christianity*, based on the *CCC*, points out that the church answers the question in degrees. These degrees of incorporation are the following: First, baptised, believing, and practicing Roman Catholics are "fully incorporated into the society of the Church" (*Lumen Gentium* 14 and *CCC* 837). Second, "those who believe in Christ and have been

⁹⁵ There is some irony here, in the fact that a leading Baptist theologian seems to be contending side-by-side (though not intentionally so) with the pope on ecclesiology.

⁹⁶ After Erickson's careful treatment of what Scripture has to say on the matter of the relationship between the local church and the universal church.

⁹⁷ This is a very descriptive and helpful term.

⁹⁸ Ratzinger may be counted among these.

properly baptized are put in a certain, though imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church” (*Unitatis Redintegratio* 3 and CCC 838). This would include such communities as the Orthodox Churches and the Anglican Church. Third, members of Protestant churches,⁹⁹ called “separated brethren” are parts of Christ’s mystical body though they are separated from his visible body in various degrees (CCC 838). Evangelicals, including Reformed Baptists, are included here. Fourth, “(t)hose who have not yet received the gospel are related to the People of God (the Church) in various ways (*Lumen Gentium* 16 and CCC 839)- most of all the Jews. Fifth, “the plan of salvation¹⁰⁰ also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place among whom are the Muslims ...” (CCC 841). Sixth, “the Church’s bond with non-Christian religions (especially Hinduism and Buddhism) is in the first place the common origin and end of the human race” (CCC 842). By these statements it is hard to see anyone as totally excluded from the catholic church. Everyone, it seems, is in some way incorporated into the catholic church. This is indeed a very broad and inclusive Catholicism. At the same time, this generous catholicity remains an embrace in the bosom of the *Roman Catholic Church*:

All men are called to this catholic unity of the People of God. ... And to it, in various ways, belong or are ordered the Catholic faithful, others who believe in Christ, and finally all mankind, called by God’s grace to salvation. Fully incorporated into the society of the Church are those who, possessing the Spirit of Christ, accept all the means of salvation given to the Church together with her entire organization, and who- by the bonds constituted by the profession of faith, the sacraments, ecclesiastical government, and communion- are joined in the visible structure of the Church of Christ, who rules her through the Supreme Pontiff and the bishops (CCC 836 and 837).

As Burke (1997:104) reminds us, “(t)he fullness of membership in the Church founded by Jesus, with all the immense benefits it brings, belongs only to Catholics”. As much as Evangelicals (including Reformed Baptists), fall within the embrace of the church according to *Lumen Gentium* and the CCC, the United States National Conference of Catholic Bishops *ad hoc* Committee on Biblical fundamentalism, in their “Pastoral Statement for Catholics on Biblical Fundamentalism”, issued March 25, 1987, criticised evangelical Christianity (which it called “biblical fundamentalism”) primarily because it took people away from the one true Church (Grudem 1994:855).

⁹⁹ Or “ecclesial communities”, rather.

¹⁰⁰ Is it significant that this statement has “the plan of salvation” and not “the church” including the Muslims?

It is not surprising that Evangelicals, and Reformed Baptists, would work to take people away from the Roman Catholic Church, because, in Reformed Baptist thinking, the Roman Catholic Church is not the true church at all, because, among other things, given their soteriology, its members are not among the regenerate,¹⁰¹ and only the regenerate are joined to the church. This is the well-known Baptist principle of regenerate church membership. It is stated in chapter 26, paragraph 2 together with paragraph 6 of the *1689 BCF*:

All persons throughout the world, professing the faith of the gospel and obedience unto God by Christ according unto it, not destroying their own profession by any errors everting the foundation, or unholiness of conversation, are and may be called visible saints, and of such ought all visible congregations to be constituted. ... The members of these churches are saints by calling, visibly manifesting and evidencing (in and by their profession and walking) their obedience unto that call of Christ, and do willingly consent to walk together, according to the appointment of Christ; giving up themselves to the Lord and one to another, by the will of God, in professed subjection to the ordinances of the gospel.

This principle makes it clear that membership of the church is for the regenerate only. And, of course, the regenerate, in the Reformed Baptist view are those who hold to a peculiarly Evangelical soteriology, which would exclude Catholics, the Jewish and Islamic religions, the Hindus, the Buddhists- all, in fact, except “born-again” Evangelical Christians. This exclusion, from the Reformed Baptist perspective, would render such faith communities and their adherents unsuitable for incorporation into the church. This places a serious stumbling block in the way to ecumenism between Reformed Baptists and Catholics, for as Ruggieri (1995:284) reminds us, the question of membership in the church is central to ecumenism.

To conclude this section, then, it can be said that the *CCC* (following Ratzinger) depicts the universal (that is catholic) church as ontologically prior to the local church, whilst the *1689 BCF* does the opposite: it seems to rather understand the local church as ontologically prior, although it does not put it in those terms. But both agree on the reality and importance of the universal (catholic) church and, at the same time, on the importance of each local church. In their affirmation of the autonomy of each local church, Reformed Baptists emphatically reject the presidency of the church of Rome, or any other local church, for that matter, over other churches.

¹⁰¹ By “the regenerate” is meant those who are “born again” in the Evangelical sense.

The most important differences, however, have to do with the question who is part of the church and who is not. The *CCC* finds room in the church for Reformed Baptists (along with just about everyone else¹⁰²), while the *1689 BCF*, includes only the regenerate, these being those who hold to Evangelical soteriology, which, of course, excludes Catholics.

The final characteristic of the church, namely its apostolicity will now be considered.

5.4 The Apostolicity of the Church.

The apostolicity of the church is one of the constitutive elements of the church. The *CCC*'s treatment of the apostolicity of the church is found in paragraphs 857-865. It begins with the simple statement that the church is apostolic because she is founded on the apostles in three ways, namely:

- That she was and remains built on the foundation of the apostles;
- She keeps and hands on the teaching of the apostles;
- She continues to be taught, sanctified and guided by the apostles until Christ's return, through their successors in pastoral office: the college of bishops, assisted by priests, in union with the successor of Peter, the Church's supreme pastor.

The *1689 BCF* contains nothing that would conflict with the first two ways in which the *CCC* states the church to be apostolic. In spirit the *1689 BCF* is in agreement that the church was and remains built on the foundation of the apostles and that she keeps and hands on the teaching of the apostles. However, as will become clear in a moment, the way the *1689 BCF* understands and describes leadership in the church places it in conflict with the third way in which the *CCC* expresses the apostolicity.

The *CCC* summarizes its statement on apostolicity as follows:

The Church is apostolic. She is built on a lasting foundation: "the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (Rev. 21:14). She is indestructible She is upheld infallibly in the truth: Christ governs her through Peter and the apostles, who are present in their successors, the Pope and the college of bishops (*CCC* 869).

¹⁰² To be sure, the *CCC* and *Lumen Gentium* speak of "the People of God", not "the church", regarding the Jews, Muslims, etc.. Roman Catholic relations with these religions take the form, not of ecumenicity, but of inter-religious dialogue.

This paragraph states the Petrine principle and the principle of apostolic succession. Not surprisingly, one does not find anything in the *1689 BCF* that comes close to affirming the Petrine principle or apostolic succession. On the contrary, with regard to authority and leadership in the church, the *1689 BCF* chapter 26, paragraph 8 affirms an eldership elected by the local congregation and which holds authority only in that local church:

A particular church, gathered and completely organized according to the mind of Christ, consists of officers and members; and the officers appointed by Christ to be chosen and set apart by the church (so called and gathered), for the peculiar administration of ordinances and execution of power and duty, which he entrusts them with, or calls them to, to be continued to the end of the world, are bishops or elders, and deacons.

For the *1689 BCF*, then, elder and bishop are interchangeable terms and these offices are filled by men elected from and by the congregation- not through appointment by the successor of Peter or by anyone else:

The way appointed by Christ for the calling of any person, fitted and gifted by the Holy Spirit, unto the office of bishop or elder in a church, is, that he be chosen thereunto by common suffrage of the church itself (*1689 BCF* chapter 26 paragraph 11).

The only apostolicity of the church that there is place for according to the *1689 BCF* is that the church was and remains built on the foundation of the apostles and that she keeps and hands on the teaching of the apostles. In this, the two documents are in complete agreement. Against the Petrine principle and apostolic succession of the *CCC*, as elements of apostolicity, however, the *1689 BCF* holds to congregationalism and an eldership (bishopric) elected by each congregation for itself.

A final element of apostolicity that must be mentioned is that of the apostolate (*CCC* 863-865). By this the *CCC* means, among other things, that “(t)he whole church is apostolic”, and is “sent out into the whole world”, and “(a)ll members of the Church share in this mission, though in various ways” (*CCC* 863). In an important sense, this affirms something very similar to what is known as the Baptist principle of the priesthood of all believers as it is stated, in part, in the *1689 BCF* chapter 26, paragraph 11:

(T)he work of preaching the Word is not so peculiarly confined to (bishops or pastors) but that others also gifted and fitted by the Holy Spirit for it and approved and called by the church may, and ought to perform it.”

It remains true, nevertheless that there are also important differences between the Baptist principle of the priesthood of all believers and the *CCC*'s affirmations regarding the apostolate. Still, the agreement that ministry is not only for bishops and elders is an important one.

5.5 Conclusion

There are, then encouraging agreements between the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF* with regard to the characteristics of the church. Both affirm the unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity of the church, though in differing ways. At the same time there are significant and, unfortunately, very divisive differences.

For the *CCC*, unity is a reality that must be acknowledged and maintained. The *CCC* describes a precise, defined, external and visible unity. Unity can be wounded, and when it is, there have to be efforts to restore it through ecumenical effort. Reformed Baptists affirm, rather, a spiritual, invisible, or mystical unity, which cannot, in any real way, be broken¹⁰³. They therefore do not see any real use for ecumenical efforts beyond that of bringing about co-operation among Evangelicals for the furthering of Evangelicalism. Furthermore, they see the division between Evangelicals and Catholics not as a problem, but as a necessity.

Both the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF* affirm the holiness of the church as real, though imperfect. The most serious disagreement here has to do with the saints. There is agreement that all Christians are saints because of baptism. In addition to this, the *CCC* describes a special category of saint, namely some of the faithful who practiced heroic virtue and lived in fidelity to God's grace to the point that such a special category of saint can be proposed to believers as models and intercessors (*CCC* 828). These saints are recognised and proclaimed through the processes of beatification and canonization. The *1689 BCF*, on the other hand simply sees all believers as saints and makes no room for a special category of saint such as that described in *CCC* 828. Reformed Baptists find the idea of a special kind of canonised saint abhorrent. It jars with their entire soteriology.

Both the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF* affirm the catholicity of the church. For the *1689 BCF* this term means simply the universality of the church, nothing less, nothing more. In

¹⁰³ This presents them with a problem when it comes to having to explain the fractures of Western Christianity.

the *CCC*, however, the church is described as catholic in a double sense: First, the church is catholic because Christ is present in her, and in her subsists the fullness of Christ's body united with its head. Secondly, the church is catholic because Christ has sent her out on a mission to the whole of the human race.

The *CCC* makes clear that each particular church is catholic through the communion with one of them, the Church of Rome, which presides in charity. Reformed Baptists would be comfortable with the statement that each particular church is catholic, but clearly not with the perspective that this is so through communion with the church of Rome.

There is often, though not always, a difference in understanding as to which is ontologically prior- the local church or the universal Church. In Ratzinger's view, for instance, the universal church is prior. In the Reformed Baptist understanding the local church comes first, with the universal church being little more than the sum of local churches, which means that the universal church is not ontologically prior.

With regard to the catholicity of the church the most important differences between the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF* revolve around stark disagreement as to who is and who is not part of the church. The *CCC* magnanimously accepts Reformed Baptists, along with almost everyone else as in a real way part of the church or, at least, of the People of God. The *1689 BCF* does not only shun this magnanimity in not seeing Reformed Baptists as part of the Catholic Church in any way, but also in including in the true church only the regenerate. And the regenerate are those who hold to Evangelical soteriology, which, of course, excludes Catholics. This point of disagreement presents one of the most serious stumbling blocks to ecumenicity between Catholics and Reformed Baptists. Once again the stumbling block is lodged in the perspective of the Reformed Baptist, rather than the Catholic perspective.

Not always known to Reformed Baptists and other Evangelicals is the fact that in the apostolate Catholics affirm something very much akin to the Baptist principle of the priesthood of all believers. Pointing out this important area of commonality to Reformed Baptists can contribute towards softening attitudes against sacerdotalism and help Reformed Baptists understand that the Catholic sacerdotal system does not situate itself between the lay believer and Christ as Lord, but rather, in tandem with the

apostolate, operates in a mediatory way towards mobilising each believer into vital ministry.

The final chapter will contain the theological conclusions to this thesis with reference to some important implications of the agreements and differences between the ecclesiologies of the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF*, with particular reference to how these impact on possible ecumenical endeavours between Reformed Baptists and Roman Catholics in a South African context.

Chapter Six
Conclusion
Implications of the Resemblances and Differences between the Ecclesiologies of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith and Their Respective Theological Frameworks, with Special Reference to a South African Context

This thesis has been an effort to critically compare the ecclesiologies of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. It has sought to identify the agreements and disagreements between these two documents- one from the seventeenth century and the other from the twentieth. Rather than merely restating the conclusions reached at the end of each chapter, this concluding chapter will draw some general conclusions from the agreements and disagreements identified and briefly discuss the implications these hold for ecumenical dialogue between Roman Catholics and Reformed Baptists in South Africa.

It must be said at the outset, that there is indeed hope towards a great and welcome improvement in the spirit in which disagreements are stated between Reformed Baptists and Roman Catholics. This much is clear when one considers the words of Iain Murray (2008:257)¹⁰⁴, Reformed Evangelical pastor, writer, editor¹⁰⁵ and close friend of South African Reformed Baptists.¹⁰⁶

We do not disagree with ... repudiation of the ugly language which has sometimes marred the divide (between Catholics and Evangelicals). It is a parody of Christianity which allows anyone to suspend love for one's neighbour if that neighbour is a theological opponent.

At the same time, much as an improved tone in the debate between Catholics and Evangelicals must be appreciated, the debate continues and fiercely so, especially from a Reformed Evangelical perspective. As Murray (2008:257, 258) hastens to add after the above words:

“This (repudiation of ugly language in the divide between Catholics and Evangelicals) is not the same, however, as accepting that Roman Catholicism as an institution warrants more respect than was given to it in former centuries.

¹⁰⁴ The quotation is from a chapter in the quoted work that reviews Mark Noll and Carolyn Nystrom's *Is the Reformation Over?* (See bibliography).

¹⁰⁵ Murray is a former editor of the Reformed publication *The Banner of Truth Magazine*. He is the co-founder of the Banner of Truth Trust, a prolific publisher of Reformed Evangelical books, widely read by Reformed Baptists. He remains closely associated with the Banner of Truth Trust.

¹⁰⁶ A few years ago Murray was the main speaker at the Grace Ministers Conference in South Africa, a conference organised and hosted by leading lights of the Reformed Baptist fraternal in South Africa.

Reformed Evangelicals, including Reformed Baptists, clearly do have difficulty in mustering more respect for Roman Catholicism than has historically been the case. For, as will hopefully become clear shortly, from a Reformed perspective, the differences between Catholicism and Reformed Evangelicalism continue to be of a more fundamental nature than mere ecclesiological emphases. But some leading Catholics as well as Evangelicals disagree with this assessment.

Catholic theologian Richard McBrien (2008:8) points out that the original German edition of *The Catholic Catechism: A Book of Christian Faith* appeared in 1973 and was described by its publisher as “the first common catechism or statement of religious belief produced jointly by theologians of the Protestant and Catholic churches since the Reformation of the sixteenth century”. McBrien (2008:8) continues to point out that the editors made the point that, “in contrast to the time of the sixteenth-century Reformation, the differences between the denominations are sharpest in their ideas about the nature of the Church,” and so “it is in this area that the most careful work must be done to clarify the points of dispute”. Evangelicals Noll and Nystrom (2005:237) agree with McBrien:

(T)he central difference that continues to separate evangelicals and Catholics is not Scripture, justification by faith, the pope, Mary, the sacraments or clerical celibacy- though the central difference is reflected in differences on these matters- but the nature of the church.

They see greatly diminished differences in the debate surrounding, for instance, the material principle of the Protestant Reformation, namely salvation by faith alone. At first glance this indeed seems to be the case.

To be sure, the ecclesiological differences between Catholics and Evangelicals are indeed real and important. Chapters 4 and 5 revealed some jarring disagreements with regard to ecclesiology as such, and, more particularly, in how each understand the constitution of the church and the characteristics of the church.

Perhaps the greatest difference, and an emotional one for the exclusivist heart of Evangelicals, has to do with the communion of the church - that is, the question as to who is and who is not part of the church. McBrien (2008:368) states clearly the more progressive view within Catholicism- a view that is entirely compatible with the CCC:

There is a greater effort now to relate Christianity to the other religions of the world and to develop new understandings of the availability of salvation, not

only outside the Catholic Church, but outside the Body of Christ as a whole. Ecclesiology has begun to assume an interfaith as well as ecumenical character. This development, of course, has not been without controversy thus far, as the many debates about *Dominus Iesus*, the document issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in September 2000, dramatically illustrate. But this is the way the world and the Church are moving- in a global and multicultural direction- and so, inevitably, are the Church's ecclesiologies.

But Reformed Baptists, following the soteriology of the *1689 BCF*, are most certainly not moving in a global and multicultural direction to the point of making an effort to relate Christianity to the other religions of the world and to develop new understandings of the availability of salvation. They continue to emphatically maintain that salvation is available by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, according to the Scriptures alone, to the glory of God alone.

Disagreements on ecclesiology indeed remain serious and divisive enough. They become more serious, though, when they are reflected in disagreements on soteriology and the authority of the Scriptures. This is true to the point where Reformed Evangelicals argue that differences with regard to these matters, and not ecclesiology, continue to constitute the key disagreement. In the words of Iain Murray (2008:260):

I turn now to the claim that the key remaining difference with Rome has to do with the nature of the church. I believe the statement is misleading. The Roman doctrine of the church- that she possesses infallibility and the rule for Christian faith and practice is the sole representative of Christ- is derived from another more fundamental belief, namely, that Scripture alone is not the rule for the Christian's faith and practice.

Here, from someone who has considerable influence among South African Reformed Baptists, is a statement that reveals how jarring the differences generated by the fact of the different theological frameworks of the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF* really are. When one considers the matter more closely and carefully it becomes apparent Murray is probably right that the key difference does not lie in ecclesiology as such at all, and that disagreements on such matters as soteriology are not merely secondary reflections from a more primary ecclesiological disagreement. From a Reformed perspective the key difference is not to be found in ecclesiology, but rather in *Sola Scriptura* and soteriology.

All this does not serve to ignore or deny the very stark ecclesiological differences between the *CCC* and the *1689 BCF* that this paper has revealed. Noll and Nystrom succinctly summarize these differences (2005:237):

For Catholics, the visible, properly constituted and hierarchically governed church is the principle God-ordained agent for the work of apostolic ministry. For evangelicals, the church is the body of Christ made up of all those who have responded to the apostolic proclamation of the God-given offer of the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ.

At the same time, as has likewise been pointed out in this thesis; there are also agreements and common ground. There is a common stance against radical Anabaptist tendencies, including the Landmarkist denial of the universal church; both hold a high view of the church; both, in a balanced affirmation of the church as a Christian community, contend against rampant individualism.

It is to be hoped that this common ground, together with that of a common view on the Trinity and other doctrinal agreements, as well as a common stance against rising secularism, would be utilized towards constructive dialogue between Reformed Baptists and Catholics, and that the starkness of the disagreements will not mar the tone in which they are discussed. Ecumenical dialogue is a discipline in which Catholics, including South African Catholics, have become quite exercised since Vatican II. Resistance to such constructive dialogue is greater from the Reformed Baptist quarter. Leading light Reformed Baptist Albert Mohler¹⁰⁷, responding to the Pope's visit to the United States of America in 2008 wrote:

... (The Pope) is not right on the papacy, not right on the sacraments, not right on the priesthood, not right on the Gospel, *not right in understanding the church* (emphasis added). The Roman Catholic Church believes that evangelicals are in spiritual danger for obstinately and disobediently excluding ourselves from submission to its universal claims and its papacy. Evangelicals are concerned that Catholics are in spiritual danger for their submission to these very claims. We both understand what is at stake. The divide between evangelical Christians and the Roman Catholic Church remains- as this Pope well understands.¹⁰⁸

We do understand what is at stake. On his website Mohler recently asserted that a convinced Catholic and a convinced evangelical are the last two people on earth who can have an honest disagreement¹⁰⁹. But honest disagreements we can always have. In

¹⁰⁷ President of the South Baptist Theological Seminary, prolific author and a man who is widely read and deeply respected by South African Reformed Baptists.

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.albertmohler.com/2008/04/16/the-pope-comes-to-america-evangelicals-thought>, accessed 2010-10-10.

¹⁰⁹ <http://www.albertmohler.com/category/topics/roman-catholicism-topic> accessed 2010-10-14.

fact, disagreements must always be honest and expressed in a gracious and civil way. Perhaps this is where future research could be of value: to determine precisely how serious the disagreements are and whether or not they are of such a fundamental nature that there is no hope at all of agreement ever being reached or, at least, of ecumenical co-operation taking place, despite the differences.

It is hoped that this thesis has served not only to identify some of the disagreements between the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, but has also established the common ground on which dialogue can take place to the glory of God and the edification of his glorious church.

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