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French Reactions to the 1517 debate in theory and practice

In 1517, Martin Luther's commentary on the role of indulgences in penance – „Ninety-Five Theses on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences" – began a process that was to shake severely the theological and pastoral foundations of Catholicism.[1] Protestants came to reject third-party intercession and individual confession with priestly absolution, which eliminated a need for indulgences for satisfaction. Catholics, however, fought back and „sought to remove perceived abuses, instil new confidence in [traditional practices] and reinforce their functions".[2] Ultimately, indulgences also survived, and over the following 200 years they were reshaped and reconceptualised in relation to the changing pastoral and disciplinary interests of the Catholic Church. In this essay, the impact of the Lutheran controversy on French perceptions and uses of indulgences will be discussed, in the short and medium term. The focus is on two issues: the immediate, direct, clerical reactions of the early 1520s and then the more medium term, indirect impact on practice across the middle and later 16th century.[3]

From their very beginnings, indulgences caused discussion and controversy amongst theologians, linked to wider debates about the operation of the sacrament of penance. Across the 15th century there were criticisms of the spiritual laxness encouraged by indulgence use. Principally, clergy condemned the popular tendency to believe that, in exchange for alms, indulgences effaced sin as well as due penance and not temporal penalty alone: as such, they were treated as a substitute for real penitence. For example, Jan Hus objected to the crusade indulgence granted by John XXIII in 1412, arguing that indulgences were only efficient in proportion to the contrition and devotion of the penitent.[4] More orthodox clerics also taught caution, such as Jean Gerson, who urged moderation to prevent the misuse of pardons. Dionysius Rickel, Johannes Major and others were critical of the poor influence of

1 For an English language version see: Martin Luther, Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences, or Ninety-FiveTheses. 1517 (URL: http://www.luther.de/en/95thesen.html; 26. 1. 2017).

2 Wietse De Boer, The Conquest of the Soul. Confession, Discipline, and Public Order in Counter-Reformation Milan, Leiden-Boston 2001, p. 10.

3 Detailed studies can be found in Elizabeth Tingle, Indulgences in the Catholic Reformation. Polemic and Pastoral Uses of Pardons in France c. 1520–1715, in: Reformation and Renaissance Review 16 (2014), pp. 180–203; and also ead., Indulgences after Luther. Pardons in Counter Reformation France, London 2015. This essay offers a summary of these works.

4 Henry Charles Lea, A History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences in the Middle Ages, 3 vols., Philadelphia 1897, vol. 3, pp. 374f.

indulgences on attitudes to salvation and stressed the necessity of true repentance.[5] The Dominican Johann Tetzel's indulgence preaching in Strasbourg diocese in 1509 was criticised by Johann Geiler von Kaysersberg again because insufficient emphasis was put on the importance of true remorse. In Geiler's view, the essential matter was the contrition of the sinner, a desire for an amendment of life, so, like the prodigal son, s/he could be reconciled with the Father. Indulgences were accessories in this process, not guarantees of satisfaction.[6]

However, the greatest weakness of pardons was their lack of clear scriptural foundation. Robert Swanson identifies three further theological reasons for concern. Firstly, recognition of indulgences was neither an article of faith nor formal doctrine so questioning their validity and effects was not heretical. Secondly, their use in penitential practices and their connection to Purgatory drew them into discussions about the operation of the spiritual powers of the papacy, especially to loose and bid souls. Thirdly, the dependence of indulgences on the theology of the treasury of merits brought them into debates about the operation of divine mercy and justice and therefore about justification itself. As Swanson argues, however, disputes about the nature and uses of indulgences were ‚containable' so long as they shared the same doctrinal foundations, above all priestly powers over the keys of heaven and a belief in Purgatory. For as long as this was the case, debates centred on the mechanisms rather than the validity of indulgences.[7]

But Julius II's bull *Liquet Omnibus*, an issue of indulgences to raise money to rebuild St Peter's in Rome, augmented criticisms of the way in which pardons were used in salvation. A plenary pardon by way of suffrage was granted to souls in Purgatory, upon payment of ‚alms' determined by the commissioners. The bull also suspended all other indulgences for eight years, which was unusual and unpopular. In 1510, the states of Germany formally presented a list of grievances to the Emperor Maximilian, which included complaints about the issuing of new indulgences with revocations of existing pardons, merely for the sake of raising money.[8] Some rulers such as Elector Frederick of Saxony did not allow Julius's indulgence in their territories until forced to do so by the Emperor. The sale of this indulgence in northern Germany was granted to Albrecht, Archbishop and Elector of Mainz, who commissioned Tetzel to preach the pardon. Tetzel was an experienced indulgence distributor, for he had preached the Jubilee of Alexander VI in 1500 and a *cruzada* indulgence for the Teutonic order in

5 Lea, History of Auricular Confession (see note 4), vol. 3, p. 294.

6 Francis Rapp, Les campagnes d'indulgences dans le diocèse de Strasbourg à la fin du moyen âge, in: Revue d'Histoire et de philosophie religieuses 83 (2003), pp. 71–88, on p. 80.

7 Robert Swanson, Indulgences in Late Medieval England: Passports to Paradise?, Cambridge 2007, pp. 278f., 281.

8 Lea, History of Auricular Confession (see note 4), vol. 3, pp. 351, 380.

1507.[9] Tetzel's new pardon campaign was the cause of Luther's ire, with its ultimately revolutionary impact on the economy of salvation of Europe.

France was quickly drawn into debates on indulgences, because it experienced the same pardon campaigns, which created similar criticisms as in the German lands, and because of frequent communications between the two regions. The first part of this essay examines the nature and process of these debates. The second part is concerned with the practical impact of these issues on religious practice. The emergence of evangelical censure and Protestant rejection of the theological premises on which pardons rested, led to a rapid decline in their promotion after 1520. This continued across the middle of the 16th century and into the period of the French religious wars. But with the resurgence of a newly-confident Catholicism from the 1570s, indulgences were also revived and reformed.

1 The 1520s – Clerical Responses to Luther

Indulgences were a common devotional practice in France in the early years of the reign of Francis I. In the „Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris", the author describes three indulgenced events he witnessed in Paris, across the years 1515 to 1525. The first of these took place on Easter day 1515, when a Jubilee indulgence granted by Pope Leo X was held in Paris to elicit prayers for the new king, Francis I. The pardon was notable because it could be gained „without giving anything, but by hearing high mass, each in his parish church, confessed and repentant of his sins and then visiting six churches", the cathedral, the Sainte-Chapelle and four churches of the mendicant orders, saying in each three Paters and three Aves. The Jubilee had already been held in the French provinces during Lent and had attracted large numbers; there was such a press of people in Sées Cathedral that up to 120 people were crushed to death.[10] The third example was that of 1525, the Jubilee of Clement VII, published in Paris in December; it was relatively short in duration, with a procession on the first Sunday of the month and after the opening of the indulgence on 11 December, fasting on the Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, confession to a personally-chosen priest and on the Sunday, communion. The diarist notes that „this was the most beautiful and devout pardon ever granted".[11] The second indulgence was that of January 1518, the crusade indulgence which was so disliked by Luther. It was published in Paris by a sermon given in the episcopal court by Monsieur de Quercus, curé of the parish of St-Jean-

9 Ibid., pp. 394, 388.

10 Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris sous le règne de François premier (1515–1536), ed. by Ludovic Lalanne, Paris 1854, p. 12.

11 Ibid., p. 210.

en-Grève. The pardon was to last for two years, during which all other indulgences in the kingdom were suspended. To gain the pardon, a family had to give its living costs for three days to the cause of the defeat of the Turks. The diarist comments that this indulgence attracted little attention in the churches of Paris.[12]

As in the German lands, so in France, the crusade indulgence was widely publicized throughout the kingdom. There are a number of surviving printed posters produced to advertise the pardon.[13] The Parisians may have received the crusade indulgence with indifference, but the writer Aymar de Rivail in Burgundy noted that some people in the region were so keen to gain the indulgence that when some men lacked money, they donated their weapons to gain the pardon and women gave their wedding dresses and other finery.[14] Again, as in Germany, this indulgene received unfavourable attention from the higher echelons of the French clergy. In January 1518, the indulgence was considered critically by the Faculty of Theology of the Sorbonne in Paris. The Faculty decided to inform the king, papal legate and diocesan bishops of „scandals and abuses which are taking place" in the preaching of the pardon and the swindling of money from the poor, with false promises. Two of the preachers of the indulgence, Nicolas Payen, a Dominican, and Nicolas Cappelly, an Augustinian, were summoned to the Sorbonne for judgement.[15] The matter of the indulgence came up again on 8 May, when Jean Duchesne asked the faculty for a ruling on the claim that a coin in the box could liberate a soul from Purgatory. The ruling of the *Qualificatio* of 1518 which resulted shows similarities to Luther's 1517 critique in that it condemned such overt merchandising as „false scandalous, deleterious to suffrages for the dead" and questioned papal authority to issue such pardons.[16] Further, this was a view shared by many humanists and intellectuals in the kingdom. Erasmus, who had a wide readership in France, mocked indulgences in his „Enchiridion" and „In Praise of Folly" and in one of his „Colloquies" called „The Exorcism or Apparition", first published in 1518, he derided the mathematical calculation of penalties due in Purgatory and the naïve acquisition of pardons as a solution.[17] In personal letters to

12 Ibid., pp. 48f.

13 Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), Réserve E-1681.

14 Marc Venard, Les ventes d'indulgences au temps de Luther, in: Michel Aubrun et al., Entre idéal et réalité. Actes du colloque international d'histoire, finance et religion, Clermont-Ferrand 1994 (Institut d'Études du Massif Central), p. 278.

15 James K. Farge, Orthodoxy and Reform in Early Reformation France. The Faculty of Theology of Paris, 1500–1543, Leiden 1985, p. 164.

16 David Bagchi, Luther's Ninety-Five Theses and the Contemporary Criticism of Indulgences, in: Robert N. Swanson (Ed.), Promissory Notes on the Treasury of Merits. Indulgences in Late Medieval Europe, Leiden-Boston MA, 2006 (Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 5), pp. 331–356, on p. 346; Léon Christiani, Luther et la Faculté de théologie de Paris, in: Revue d'Histoire de l'Église de France 32 (1946), pp. 53–83, on p. 55; Farge, Orthodoxy and Reform (see note 15), p. 165.

17 Desiderius Erasmus, The Exorcism or Apparition, in: All the Familiar Colloquies of Desiderius

John Colet, Thomas More and Cardinal Albert de Brandenburg between 1517 and 1519, Erasmus criticised indulgences. When censured by the Carmelite Nicolas Baechem of the faculty of theology of Louvain, Erasmus defended himself by claiming that he had not condemned pardons but urged caution over too much reliance on papal bulls. His view was that trust in Christ was a surer way to salvation, which he shared with reformers.[18]

Luther was at first delighted with the reception of his works in France. In February 1519, Johann Froben wrote to Luther to inform the reformer of the success of an operation to send 600 copies of his works to France and Spain. David Hempsall argues that at this time, „French intellectuals ... regarded Luther simply as a significant if recent contributor to the great debate of reform".[19] Later in the same year, Duke George of Saxony asked the Sorbonne, along with the university of Erfurt (which declined) to judge the orthodoxy of Luther's position in the disputations with Johann Eck at Leipzig. Eck cast around for support and asked Paul de Citadinis, resident at the Papal curia and an old friend of Eck's, to influence the Sorbonne to find in Eck's favour. Citadinis wrote to Etienne Poncher, archbishop of Sens and an old acquaintance, in whose jurisdiction of the University of Paris lay, to ask him to facilitate „an exact and prompt decision" to ensure that „the way was not opened to heretical errors".[20] However, affairs moved quickly while the Sorbonne's judgement took some time, and other developments overtook the Leipzig debate. In 1520, Luther published three radical works which led to their condemnation in Rome in the form of the bull *Exurge, Domine* and then his excommunication in January 1521.[21] In any case, the Sorbonne was always more interested in issues of papal authority rather than simply indulgences.[22] When the Sorbonne eventually ruled on Luther's writings on 15 April 1521, concerns had gone beyond mere pardons: there were 104 articles of criticism. Luther's protests had escalated to include more fundamental issues such as justification, Church authority, Purgatory, saintly intercession and the sacraments.[23]

Erasmus, of Roterdam, Concerning Men, Manners, and Things, transl. by Nathan Bailey, 2 vols., London 1878, vol. 1, pp. 391–401. There is a 1526 imprint, without publisher and a 1527 edition by the Parisian printer Simon Colineums.

18 Léon E. Halkin, La place des indulgences dans la pensée religieuse d'Erasme, in: Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire du Protestantisme français 129 (1983), pp. 143–154, on p. 145f.

19 David S. Hempsall, Martin Luther and the Sorbonne 1518–1521, in: Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research 46 (1973), pp. 28–40, on p. 29.

20 Nathaniel Weiss, Martin Luther, Jean Eck et l'Université de Paris d'après une lettre inédite 11 septembre 1519, in: Bulletin de la société de l'histoire du Protestantisme français 66 (1917), pp. 35–50, on pp. 39–41.

21 Hempsall, Martin Luther and the Sorbonne (see note 19), pp. 33f.

22 Christiani, Luther et la Faculté de théologie de Paris (see note 16), p. 55.

23 A detailed discussion of the 104 articles can be found in Christiani, Luther et la Faculté de théologie de Paris (see note 16), pp. 65–77; also Farge, Orthodoxy and Reform (see note 15), pp. 125–128,

Oddly perhaps, the Sorbonne's *Determinatio* notably omits a discussion of indulgences. Farge argues that this may be because the Faculty had recently ruled on them in 1518 but it may also be because there was still ambivalence about their operation.[24]

However, from 1521 onwards, it was the full Lutheran ‚programme', if we can call it that, which rattled the Sorbonne. He was quickly demonized as a „precurser of Antichrist and a political and social subversive" and the university attacked prominent humanists whom they considered to be heterodox and who enjoyed royal protection.[25] The Sorbonne together with the judicial authority of the Paris parlement moved towards repression. From 1521, book printing and selling was controlled, with fines for possession and dissemination of heretical works.[26] In 1523, Lutheran books were seized from Louis de Berquin, a prominent scholar, and also from booksellers in Paris; in 1526, a list of forbidden Lutheran doctrines was published and in the middle years of the 1520s the first executions for heresy took place in Paris and Rouen.[27] There were few debates in France solely about indulgences, however. Iconoclasm and sacramentarianism became increasingly prevalent and much more shocking concerns for Catholic authors and polemicists. For the clerical elite, it was prevention and suppression of deviancy rather than debate about pardons which dominated considerations.

2 Changes in Practice

The emergence of evangelical censure and Protestant rejection of the theological premises on which pardons rested, led to a rapid decline in their promotion in France after 1520. Even among writers and theologians who remained Catholic, disapproval was evident. If we turn to religious practice, we see that after the mid-1520s, the popularity and usage of indulgences began to wane in France, although the picture is regionally varied. This was part of a wider change in spirituality, for pardon use declined along with other traditional practices such as the foundation of anniversaries and confraternity membership. There are numerous reasons for this change, which

165–169. The articles were published in Josse Bade, Determinatio theologicae facultatis parisiensis super doctrina Lutheriana hactenus per eam visa, Paris 1521.

24 Farge, Orthodoxy and Reform (see note 15), p. 167.

25 David Nicholls, Heresy and Protestantism, 1520–1542. Questions of Perception and Communication, in: French History 10 (1996), pp. 182–205, on p. 184f.

26 David Hempsall, Measures to Supress ‚La peste luthérienne' in France 1521–22, in: Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research 49 (1976), pp. 296–299.

27 Mark Greengrass, The French Reformation, Oxford 1987, p. 9. See also David Nicholls, Social Change and Early Protestantism in France: Normandy 1520–62, in: European Studies Review 10 (1980), pp. 279–308.

is complex: reformers' criticisms; anti-clericalism; and economic problems from 1530 exacerbated by the Hapsburg-Valois wars, which reduced incomes and also activities such as pilgrimage.

There are numerous indicators of this decline in the use of indulgences. Outside of France, the Roman Jubilee and its plenary indulgence of 1525 under Clement VII was something of a failure. There was plague in Rome; war between France and Spain as well as the Peasants' War in Germany made much of Europe insecure for pilgrims, and the effects of the Reformation were beginning to tell.[28] The event and its pardons failed to attract pilgrims. In France itself, there is evidence from a range of ecclesiastical institutions that indulgences declined in attractiveness and use after 1530. In the archdiocese of Rouen for example, before the onset of the religious wars after 1560, the cathedral chapter annually commissioned handbills to advertise their indulgences, for distribution to the *curés* of each parish of the see. The costs were entered into the chapter accounts every year to 1563; thereafter there was a hiatus until the late 1570s, when printing costs were again recorded and thereafter continued into the 1680s.[29] In Nantes, the confraternity of Notre-Dame des Carmes obtained several indulgences before 1518; thereafter, there are no records of new pardons until 1639 and 1643, when papal briefs confirmed the guild's privileges.[30] For another long-lived institution, the Hôtel-Dieu of Paris, the late 15thcentury and 1520s and 1530s were again important. After that period, there were no new indulgences until the first half of the 17th century, although the existing grants continued to be marketed across the mid-century.[31] The chronology of grants of indulgences to the well-documented confraternities of the regular orders also supports this model. A handbook for the Rosary confraternity of Nancy published in 1625 illustrates evolution in grants over time. High spots of activity occurred in the later 15th century, 1520s and 1530s, then 1570s and 1580s, with little activity in the mid-16th century.[32] All of these examples show the impact of Luther's and other reformers' opinions on popular reception of indulgences in the middle decades of the 16th century.

Indulgences were still available, they did not disappear, and some new ones were issued, but in much smaller numbers.[33] For example, in Rome in the 1530s, plenary indulgences were issued for members of confraternities such as that of the Holy Sacrament in St Maria sopra Minerva, to which Paul III granted plenary indulgences

28 Lea, History of Auricular Confession (see note 4), vol. 3, p. 214.

29 Archives Départementales (= AD) de la Seine-Maritime, references are scatted across the accounts of the Chapter of Notre-Dame of Rouen: G 2523 to G 2616; G 2848.

30 Yves Durand, Un couvent dans la ville. Grands Carmes de Nantes, Rome 1997, p. 92.

31 Inventaire sommaire des archives hospitalières antérieures à 1790. Hôtel-Dieu, vol. 1., Paris 1882, p. 385.

32 Thomas Le Paige, Le Manuel des confrères du S. Rosaire, Nancy 1625.

33 See Venard on indulgences issued in the diocese of Carpentras in the early and mid-16th century. Venard, Les ventes d'indulgences (see note 14), pp. 281f.

in 1539.[34] These were available to affiliates throughout Europe. In the south of France, a number of Corpus Christi confraternities changed their dedication and aggregated to the confraternity of Rome in order to obtain the indulgences: Rodez in 1541–1543 and Fanjeux in the Mirepoix are two examples.[35] There are sporadic mentions in individual and family journals: the „livre de raison" of the Dudrot de Capdebosc family of the Condom region recorded papal pardons available in the town in 1536 – when inhabitants participated in a procession, barefoot – and in February 1543.[36] In 1533, notices went up in Paris advertising a pardon of 28.000 years. The Sorbonne notified the vicar of Paris, René du Bellay, of their concern and asked that he do something about it. According to Oudart Coquault, a 17th-century memorialist living in Reims, the Cardinal of Lorraine attempted unsuccessfully in 1564 to obtain an indulgence from Pius V for the Cathedral of Reims for Easter day; the pope did however grant an indulgence to the abbey of Fontevraud, to commemorate the preservation of the house from Protestant attack in the early wars of religion.[37] Overall, evidence for pardons is scarce for the mid-century. There are few surviving bulls, briefs or posters advertising indulgences and few authors wrote specifically on either Purgatory or pardons during middle years of the century. The evolutionary trend is therefore an early-16th-century popularity, a hiatus across the mid-century, a late 16th-century revival, and consolidation and expansion after 1600.

But across the mid- to late 16th century, there were also changes to indulgences, many of them taking place outside of France but with a strong impact on the kingdom. This meant that when pardons were revived in the latter part of the century, there was a somewhat different ‚product', at least with regard to the plenary indulgences which are the focus of this essay.[38] Once of the clearest differences between late medieval and Counter Reformation indulgences was their post-Tridentine standardization in terms of the contents and diplomatic of the pardon. By the first half of the 16th century, plenary indulgence briefs had quite a lot of common content but also much variation in detail. They granted pardon once during life and on the death bed, on condition of penitence and a confession; a confessor of choice was permitted and

34 Lea, A History of Auricular Confession (see note 4), vol. 3, p. 408.

35 Marie-Hélène Froeschlé-Chopard, Dieu pour tous et Dieu pour soi. Histoire des confréries et de leurs images à l'époque moderne, Paris 2006, p. 92; AD Aude, H265/1, Dominicains de Fanjeaux, Bulles.

36 Livre de raison de la famille Dudrot de Capdebosc (1522–1675) ed. by Philippe Tamizey de Larroque, Paris 1891, pp. 17, 40f.

37 Mémoires d'Oudard Coquault, Bourgeois de Reims (1549–1668), ed. by Charles Loriquet, Reims 1875, p. 520; Andrew Spicer, Jeanne-Baptiste de Bourbon, the Plantagenets and Restoration of Royal Tombs in Early Seventeenth-Century France, in: Michael Penman (Ed.), Monuments and Monumentality in Medieval and Early Modern Europe, Donnington 2013, pp. 268–281, on p. 278.

38 Partial indulgences showed more continuity. For details see Tingle, Indulgences after Luther (see note 3), ch. 4.

he was granted powers to absolve all reserved sins and to commute vows except for those of the religious life. Such pardons also granted participation in the suffrages of the universal church. Many plenary indulgences also required alms of some sort. In addition, a multiplicity of different clauses could apply. For example, an indulgence granted by Leo X for the consecration of King Francis I in 1514 required a visit to a cathedral during the Quadragesima, where prayers for the king and his realm, for peace between princes, a Pater and Ave should be said.[39] A plenary indulgence of Clement VII of 1526 for the church of Saint-Sernin of Toulouse specified prayers for the departed and a donation, for the pardon.[40] A pardon granted in 1539 for the confraternity of Notre-Dame de Recouvrance in the Carmelite church of Montreuil-sur-Mer in the diocese of Arras, gave entrants the privilege of acquiring the indulgences of the stations of Rome by visiting local churches during Lent; dispensation to eat butter, eggs, milk and cheese during Lent; the use of portable altars to have mass said at home, and the right of female benefactors to visit and dine with the nuns of the Poor Clares, four times a year.[41] Pre-Tridentine indulgences were often individual in their contents.

By the later 16th century, the format of plenary indulgences had become standardized and would remain so until the end of the *ancien regime*.[42] For example, plenary pardons granted to confraternities – one of the most common forms – were everywhere more or less the same. Such indulgences allowed three occasions for full remission: to members on the day of their admission, at the hour of their death and for visitors to the annual feast day celebrated by the group in its chapel or church. In addition, the grant allowed partial indulgences for four secondary feast days, of seven years and seven quarantines each. Thus, the confraternity of the Holy Sacrament of Saint-Aignan parish in the diocese of Le Mans received a plenary indulgence from Urban VIII in 1625. The grant was for an individual's reception into the guild, on his or her deathbed and for attendance at the main annual feast day of Corpus Christi. The four secondary feasts were the octave of Corpus Christi, the feasts of Saints Aignan and Anne, and the Annunciation.[43] Similarly, an indulgence of 1638 granted to the wives' confraternity of St Margaret in the church Sainte-Croix of Lyons granted seven years and quarantines to those who, confessed and having taken communion, visited the chapel of their patron on the feasts of Pentecost, Assumption, All Saints

39 AD Haute-Garonne, 3 G 15.

40 AD Haute-Garonne, 1 Mi 516, Collégiale Saint-Sernin.

41 BnF, Réserve E, 1133.

42 Desmette comments that such indulgences appear in confraternity archives from 1580. Philippe Desmette, Les brefs d'indulgences pour les confréries des diocèses de Cambrai et de Tournai aux XVII[e] et XVIII[e] siècles: A.S.V. Sec. Brev. Indulg. Perpetuae, 2–9, Brussels 2002, p. 30.

43 AD Sarthe, G 773, St Aignan, Fabrique.

and Christmas Day.[44] Further, such indulgence briefs also granted group members 60 days of pardon for a wide range of other spiritual works such as attending masses and funerals, accompanying processions, particularly those of the viaticum, reconciling enemies, teaching the ignorant and other charitable deeds. Pardons granted for church feast days and for privileged altars, a creation of the Counter Reformation, were similarly standardised across the Catholic world.

A second feature of change over time was increasing resort to the papacy for indulgences, such that the papal plenary pardon became the must-have pardon for groups. Robert Swanson argues that in the middle ages, the majority of indulgences were created by bishops for their diocesans.[45] Across the Catholic Reformation period, bishops issued fewer indulgences although there were always some. For example, in May 1554, the bishop of Vannes granted 40 days' pardon to those who contributed to the rebuilding of the chapel of Notre-Dame du Paradis in Hennebont, which had been incomplete since 1514.[46] On the south porch of the parish church of Plougasnou in Tréguier diocese is inscribed, „On Sunday 2 May 1574 this church was [consecrated] and there are 40 days' pardon for the first Sunday of every May and the holy day of Easter as well".[47] But many bishops were non-resident or displaced during the religious wars; almost all French dioceses had some years without a bishop in the latter half of the century.[48] After the end of the conflicts, when the Crown regained control over appointments and diocesans rebuilt their administrations and reformed their dioceses, indulgences were again issued as a normal part of bishops' pastoral work. But they seem to have been fewer in number and the forty-day indulgence of bishops was increasingly superseded at the local level by the widespread availability of papal plenary pardons.[49] Papal indulgences were already sought before the Reformation, to augment the prestige of the local pardon event. But from the later 16th century, parish churches and chapels, confraternities and shrines, increasingly resorted to Rome for plenary indulgences. In the 17th century, most local pardons were papal and plenary. Philippe Desmette's study of indulgences issued for confraternities in the dioceses of Cambrai and Tournai shows that cross the 17th century, up to 52% of parishes received at least one papal brief in Cambrai diocese, with up to 63% of

44 AD Rhône, 10, G 571, Chapitre de Saint-Jean de Lyon, Indulgences.

45 Swanson, Indulgences (see note 7), p. 32.

46 Christiane Prigent, Pouvoir ducale, religion et production artistique en Basse-Bretagne, 1350–1575, Paris 1992, p. 473.

47 Ibid., p. 484.

48 Joseph Bergin, Church, Society and Religious Change in France 1580–1730, New Haven-London 2009, p. 156.

49 Stefano Simiz, Les confréries face à l'indulgence. Tradition, quête, accueil et effets dans la France de l'est (XV–XVIIIeme siècles), in: Bernard Dompnier / Paola Vismara (Eds.), Confréries et dévotions dans la catholicité moderne (mi-XVe – début XIXe siècle), Rome 2008, p. 104.

parishes in Tournai.[50] Bernard Dompnier's work on French confraternities shows that 31% of papal briefs for pardons issues in the decade 1653–1662, went to France.[51] Most Catholics had access to papal pardons.

A third transformation was the abolition of pardoners in the exchange of indulgences. Pardoners had long been criticised in the Church. From at least 1216, clerical councils were concerned with the chicaneries of pardoners and tried to regulate their preaching and collections.[52] The activities of wandering pardoners were a constant challenge to discipline in the French Church in the pre-Reformation period. In the diocese of Limoges, for example, the bishops denounced preachers peddling false relics and indulgences in 1519 and 1533, as itinerant pardoners continued to vaunt their wares.[53] Statutes of Meaux of 1511 forbade pardon-sellers and confraternities from collecting in parishes, except for the well-known pardon of the Hôtel-Dieu of Paris; statues of Tournai and of Angoulême from around 1520 were similarly framed.[54] Luther's criticism heightened awareness of the abuse of ‚selling salvation'. There was also the issue of authority, a central matter for the Catholic Reformation. In France, provincial Church councils and local synods of the late 15th and 16th centuries sought to regulate collectors, to prevent the deception of the faithful and to reinforce episcopal authority. The Council of Sens of 1528 condemned pardoners who tricked the faithful.[55] Acts of the Council of Narbonne of 1551 and the statutes of the synod of Beauvais of 1554 stated that parish clergy were not to allow wandering collectors to preach and receive alms, without seeing their authorization. Priests were to notify the bishop's administration if false pardoners were suspected.[56] At the Council of Trent, the actions of pardoners were considered to have brought indulgences into disrepute. In July 1562, a decree forbade the use of *quaestores* to distribute indulgences and banned the office of pardoner itself. Alms could still be collected for indulgences, but the necessary authorization of the bishop was mandated and oblations were to be gathered by two canons working without charge, „so that all might understand that

50 Desmette, Les brefs d'indulgences (see note 42), pp. 58, 71, 285.

51 Bernard Dompnier, La dévotion à Saint Joseph au miroir des confréries (XVIIe–XVIIIe siècles), in Dompnier/Vismara (Eds.), Confréries et dévotions (see note 49), p. 297.

52 Lea, A History of Auricular Confession (see note 4), vol. 3, pp. 285f.

53 Michel Cassan, Le temps des guerres de religion. Le cas du Limousin (vers 1530 – vers 1630), Paris 1996, p. 80.

54 Venard, Les ventes d'indulgences (see note 14), pp. 276f.

55 Ibid., p. 280.

56 Concilia novissima Galliae, ed. by Ludovici Odespun de La Mechinière, Paris 1646, p. 756; Canons et décrets des conciles, constitutions, statuts, et lettres des évêques des differents diocèses qui dépendaient autrefois à la métropole de Reims, ed. by Thomas Goussset, 3 vols., Reims 1844, vol. 3, pp. 141f.

these celestial treasures were employed not for gain but as an incentive to piety".[57] In France, this was adopted and reinforced in subsequent synods. At the Council of Reims of 1564, *quaestores* were condemned as simoniacs.[58] The synodal statutes of the Council of Lyons of 1577 sum up late 16th-century suspicions of pardoners:

> „The devil, not ceasing to cause ... trouble in the Church of God, by himself or through his minions, has created a heap of pardoners, avaricious and ambitious, who by ruses and artifices in the guise of religion, vows and alms, under the pretext of preaching, trick and seduce the clergy, parishioners and simple people, not without great loss of souls."[59]

The provincial councils of Rouen in 1581, Toulouse in 1590, at Narbonne in 1609 and at the Council of the French Clergy of 1625, all ruled against them.[60] Indulgenced collections did not end – particularly for captives – but pardoners disappeared.

A fourth evolution was a greater relationship between lay confraternities and indulgences. By the end of the Middle Ages, large numbers of adults were enrolled in confraternities, a practice which expanded from the second half of the 16th century in France. Robert Bireley comments that „the high rate of confraternity membership in early modern Europe meant a high rate of indulgence consumption, as membership and indulgence went hand in hand".[61] Philippe Desmette argues that it appears to have become normal practice in the late-16th and 17th centuries for newly-founded confraternities – and those already in place – to solicit the Holy See for indulgences, as a matter of course.[62] But this had not always been the case. Early 16th-century confraternities did not endow their members with lavish pardons and indeed, not all post-Tridentine associations did so. The medieval confraternity gave some access to indulgences to its members but this was unsystematic and limited. Swanson comments that once guilds achieved a certain size, some sought papal grants to attract members, but most pardons were episcopal.[63] They were moderate in scale, of 25, 40 or 100 days, although the value could be increased by repetition. Thus for example, in Nantes in 1475, Bishop Amaury d'Acigné confirmed the confraternity of Notre-Dame in the Carmelite convent of the city and granted members 40 days' indulgence.[64] In Limoges, a confraternity of St Etienne was founded at the beginning

57 Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, ed. by Norman P. Tanner, 2 vols., London-Washington, vol. 2, session XXI, chap. 9, pp. 731f.

58 Concilia novissima Galliae (see note 56), p. 24.

59 Statuts et ordonnances synodales de l'église métropolitaine de Lyon, primatiale des gaules, Lyon 1577, p. 30.

60 Concilia novissima Galliae (see note 56), pp. 582, 708.

61 Robert Bireley, Early Modern Catholicism as a Response to the Changing World of the Long Sixteenth Century, in: Catholic Historical Review 95 (2009), pp. 219–239, on p. 225.

62 Desmette, Les brefs d'indulgences (see note 42), p. 27.

63 Swanson, Indulgences (see note 7), p. 243.

64 Durand, Un couvent dans la ville (see note 30), p. 92.

of the 16th century, to raise funds for the restoration of the cathedral. Inscription in the confraternity again earned a 40 day indulgence.[65] Over time, there was a tendency to augment the privileges associated with confraternity. This was frequently the work of religious orders who extended their devotions to wider society such as the Carmelite order which promoted the wearing of a protective ‚scapular' among its friars and then extended the practice to its associated confraternities. Indulgenced confraternities seem to have originated in Italy and spread into France from the later 16th century; they were particularly associated with new devotional forms and were widespread enough, by the end of the period, to make pardons accessible to many people. By such means, religious guilds were a means of accessing pardons, while staying at home.

A key development of the mid-16th century was the creation of arch-confraternities, whereby local groups throughout Catholic Europe affiliated with Roman confraternities to share their structures, devotions and particularly their indulgences. The first of these was a confraternity of the Holy Sacrament in Santa Maria sopra Minerva, the Dominican church in Rome, created in 1539, mentioned above. This was designed from the outset to be a model for all new fraternities. Its main aim was the reaffirmation and expression of the central dogma of Catholicism, the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, in the face of Protestant attacks.[66] The bull granted each member of the association, on the day of their entry „the same plenary indulgence as the jubilee" and three further plenaries during their lifetime; 100 days of pardon for accompanying processions of the Holy Sacrament and for attending the confraternity's religious offices and ten years of pardon to those who attended the fraternity's mass in the church of the Minerva on Fridays.[67] The indulgences were to be communicated to all confraternities founded on this model and aggregated to the Minerva, and all members, wherever they were based, enjoyed the same spiritual privileges.[68] Two other confraternal associations were also influential in the repurposing of confraternities and their closer association with indulgences: that of the Rosary and Penitents' groups. The Rosary confraternity, first created at Douai in 1470 by the Dominicans, shared the premises of the Holy Sacrament confraternities. Members associated over a wide geographical range to share a specific devotion – praying and meditating with the rosary – and to share spiritual merits of all other confrères and consoeurs, throughout Christendom.[69] From the mid-16th century, the confraternity

65 Cassan, Le temps des guerres de religion (see note 53), p. 80.

66 Froeschlé-Chopard, Dieu pour tous (see note 35), p. 27.

67 A copy of the original bull, translated into French, is in: AD Aude, H 265/1, Dominicains de Fanjeaux, Bulles. See also Pierre Forestier, Histoire des indulgences et des jubilez, avec des instructions pour en expliquer le dogme et ou il est encore traite de l'origine des confreries, Paris, 1702, p. 154.

68 Froeschlé-Chopard, Dieu pour tous (see note 35), p. 89.

69 Ibid., pp. 66, 68

took off enormously, assisted by Pius V who attributed the victory of Lepanto of 1571 to the intercession of the Virgin Mary through the rosary, so he created a feast day on 7 October and accorded a plenary indulgence to all churches with rosary confraternities for that day.[70] In France, rosary confraternities were rare before the second half of the 16th century but their development would be hugely influential after the end of the religious wars. Penitents were another feature of late medieval Mediterranean piety, their originality lay in their strongly regulated societies characterised by the wearing of a distinctive habit to separate them off from society, the role of their ‚priors' as spiritual guides and their independent meeting places and methods of discipline. In 1576, Gregory XIII granted the penitents' confraternity of Gonfalone several privileges and indulgences, which his successor Sixtus V permitted them to aggregate to other confraternities, while contributed to their spread.[71] In later 16th-century France Penitents were associated with austere piety and militant Catholicism.[72] Largely concentrated in southern France, they received royal patronage when in 1574 Henri III was received into the White Penitents of Avignon and participated in their exercises and processions. He went on to affiliate with the Penitents of Lyons in 1582 and to found a company in Paris at the Annonçiades. This was followed by three other Penitent confraternities in the capital and a handful of foundations in other large towns of northern France. After Trent, therefore, confraternities re-emerged forcefully as pillars of religious life, in town and countryside. Many of these were directly linked to pardons and promoted indulgence use in almost every community.

Alongside institutional changes we also see increased Christological association of indulgences. Over the course of the 16th century, the requirement to take communion to gain a plenary indulgence grew more important. In the later Middle Ages, the relationship was infrequent. To gain the plenary indulgence granted to the Cathedral of Rouen in 1514, an individual had to be „truly repentant and confessed" and for a pardon issued by Paul III in 1541 for people attending the first mass of Cardinal de Givry as bishop of Poitiers, the individual had to be „truly penitent and confessed, or having a firm intention to confess and wanting to confess".[73] Over time, the requirement of taking the Eucharist became essential. The association between communion and plenary indulgence began in the Middle Ages with jubilees, but it was given particular prominence when the arch-confraternity of the holy sacrament was founded in Rome in the 1530s; adherence took off in Mediterranean France before

70 Forestier, Histoire des indulgences (see note 67), p. 156–158

71 Ibid., p. 150; see Barbara Wisch/Nerida Newebigin, Acting on Faith. The Confraternity of the Gonfalone in Renaissance Rome, Philadelphia 2013.

72 John Bossy, Leagues and Associations in Sixteenth-Century French Catholicism, in: Studies in Church History 23 (1986), pp. 171–189, on p. 176.

73 AD Seine-Maritime, G 3607, Chapitre Notre-Dame de Rouen, Indulgences; AD Vienne, G 14, Evéché de Poitiers.

the religious wars, slowly gaining ground elsewhere in the kingdom in the later 16th, then speeding up across the 17th century. By 1600, full pardons were only accessible through the Eucharist. This meant that the need for formal sacramental penitence and confession was stricter and more limited in time, for they had to be performed before taking the Eucharist necessary for the indulgence.

Finally, the Counter Reformation saw the ending of monetary payments for indulgences. In the early 16th century, a plenary indulgence frequently necessitated the giving of donations, the sum of which could be stipulated, for outward charity was an essential aspect of plenary pardon.[74] The most famous example is the early 16th-century pardon for the rebuilding of St Peter's in Rome, but it was a widespread practice. Thus, in the Rouen Cathedral indulgence of 1514, a pardon-seeker had to visit one of the cathedrals of Normandy between first and second vespers of the middle Sunday of Lent or on the first Sunday of Advent. The indulgence required a specific donation towards the repair of these churches, with 20 sous asked of the rich, 10 sous from the middling sort, 5 or 2,5 sous from the poor and 5 deniers from the impoverished.[75] The crusade indulgence of Leo X, preached in 1517, was available to households for a donation equal to the value of three days' living costs, as seen above in Paris.[76] The requirement of alms disappeared by the end of the 16th century. Already for the Jubilee of 1525, following Luther's criticisms, Clement VII omitted clauses respecting money payments from the bull of indulgence and in their place five Pater Nosters were substituted. From Gregory XIII's Roman Jubilee of 1575, voluntary oblations became the rule. When the Jubilee was extended over Europe in 1576, nothing was stated about alms.[77] In Session XXV of December 1562, bishops were commanded to be alert to abuses of pardons, so that „the gift of holy Indulgences may be dispensed to all the faithful, piously, holily, and incorruptly".[78] A decision was also made to abolish fixed-price indulgences, including the *cruzada* indulgence in Spain.[79] The requirement of alms became discretionary where charity was advised.

74 Venard, Les ventes d'indulgences (see note 14), pp. 275–286.
75 AD Seine-Maritime, G 3607.
76 Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris, ed. by Lalanne (see note 10), pp. 48f.
77 Lea, History of Auricular Confession (see note 4), vol. 3, p. 216
78 Tanner (Ed.), Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils (see note 57), vol. 2, pp. 796f., session XXV, chap. 21.
79 Lea, A History of Auricular Confession (see note 4), vol. 3, p. 419.

3 Conclusions

In conclusion, short-term, direct clerical reactions to Luther's „Ninety-five Theses" were muted. It was Lutheranism in its wider form, that is, his new theology of justification along with his rejection of the authority of the papacy, the cult of saints, Purgatory and five of the seven sacraments, which was the cause of controversy. But Lutheran and less radical but similarly Christological and Scriptural evangelical influences, were enormously important in their impact on Catholic practice. One piece of evidence for this is that in the medium term, there was a widespread decline in indulgence use, amongst all social groups. There were geographical differences to this chronology. Despite the success of Protestantism in the south of France, indulgences – especially for arch-confraternity membership – were more evident in the dioceses of the Midi in the 1540s and 1550s than in the north, until the religious wars affected the region. The turning point came after 1570. The rebuilding of papal spiritual authority after Trent and especially under Gregory XIII and Sixtus V; the Jubilee of 1575; and the militant Catholicism of the League rebellion of the 1580s, rehabilitated traditional practices. French clerical writers slowly began to recommend the use of pardons again and communities began to seek them out more visibly. Thereafter, papal indulgences were acquired in many communities and congregations throughout France. By the 17th century, indulgences were again everywhere in Catholic Europe. Pardons survived the Protestant Reformation to become again a widespread practice in the Church. Indulgences outlived Luther, were reinvented and refashioned as a powerful tool of Catholic reform.