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SIBRANDUS LUBBERTUS (1555-1625)
AND REFORMED POLEMICS ON AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY
DAVE HOLMLUND

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN
MAY 2016
To Elizabeth, Zach, Ezra, Evie, and Ben—

My beloved family and faithful companions on the way
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ABSTRACT

Sibrandus Lubbertus (1555-1625) was a German born Reformed theologian who spent most of his life teaching at the University of Franeker in Friesland, a northern region of the Netherlands. Among his publications, the most significant in size and importance were his disputational works, which used a polemical form to address controversial issues of the post-Reformation period in which he gave a robust defense of the Reformed position over and against the most influential voices of his day, whether they themselves were a more heterodox expression of Protestant theology or simply Roman Catholic.

This dissertation examines the major treatises of Lubbertus, which were written to refute Robert Bellarmine, the great Jesuit apologist of the Roman Catholic Church during the Counter Reformation. Specifically, this dissertation argues that Lubbertus—who, in the past, has been largely ignored in both English and Dutch scholarship for being a mere polemicist—is important for the development of the Reformed tradition precisely because of his use of the polemical form to write about the doctrine of Scripture (prolegomena) and the doctrine of the church (ecclesiology). He wrote with particular influence on the topic of church councils, which brought together prolegomena and ecclesiology to address one of the long standing issues between Protestants and Catholics even into the seventeenth century—Who has the authority to settle controversies in the church once and for all? This research seeks to offer greater insight into the theology of Sibrandus Lubbertus, the theological genre of polemics in the post-Reformation period, and the ways Bellarmine’s challenge provided the occasion for the advancement of Reformed theology throughout the seventeenth century.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Thesis

The post-Reformation era of Protestantism was an age of controversy and dispute, and the greatest thinkers of this period did not refrain from entering into these contests of ideas, rhetoric, and (in some cases) even social and military might. The German-born theologian Sibrandus Lubbertus (1555-1625) was one of the great theological minds of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, and he also participated in some of these religious and social clashes on behalf of the Reformed system of doctrine and those who upheld Reformed orthodoxy in the church, the academy and society. By his own estimation, theological polemics was the calling which God placed upon his life, such that in one of his writings he declared, “I will not withdraw myself from the defense of truth so long as God gives me life and good health.”¹ This singular goal for Lubbertus has not escaped the notice of historians. One Dutch religious historian who has researched the life and significance of Lubbertus writes in a widely used reference work, “The main theme of Lubbertus’ life was his controversy with Rome.”² True as this

¹ In the foreword to De Iesu Christo Servatore (Franeker: Aegidius Radaeus, 1611), he writes, “…me non detrectaturum esse veritatem defendere, quamdiu Deus mihi vitam et firmam valetudinem concessurus est.”

evaluation may be in generalizing about Lubbertus’ publications, the vast majority of the literature on Sibrandus Lubbertus has hastily concluded from this either that he was thus a thinker of little historical importance or that he must have been a man of low character to be consumed by such a mean-spirited task.

The burden of this study will be to overturn the long tradition of caricature and misrepresentation which has distorted the historical picture of Lubbertus and his writings purely out of dislike for the polemical era in which he lived and the polemical style in which he wrote. More specifically, this study will present an analysis of a portion of Lubbertus’ theological writings in the context in which he wrote, giving close attention to a reoccurring theme which he treated in his numerous published exchanges with the Roman Catholics—the question of authority in the church. Within this heated context, I will argue that Sibrandus Lubbertus emerges as an important theologian who develops the Reformed doctrines of theological prolegomena and ecclesiology in the context of his refutations of the great Jesuit controversialist, Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621). As Lubbertus illustrates, the polemical genre was not incapable of pushing forward theological development. In fact, the era in which theologians like Lubbertus responded to Bellarmine marked a critical chapter in the history of Protestant thought.³ By analyzing a select number of Lubbertus’ published works in their historical context, this study will improve upon the current secondary literature about a major Reformed figure during the time of Early Orthodoxy, it will set forth the continuity and the discontinuity in prolegomena and ecclesiology in the post-Reformation period, and it will describe the actual issues at stake during one critical period of Protestant theology.

Lubbertus in Context: Franeker’s Academy

While Lubbertus himself was born in Germany, educated at German and Swiss institutions, and respected as a scholar all across the Protestant regions of Europe, the most productive and significant years of his life were spent in Friesland, a northern province of the Netherlands. Consequently, the story of the first century of the Protestant Reformation in the Netherlands is an important backdrop to his life and work. Indeed, it was the experience of the Reformed church in Friesland in particular which brought Lubbertus to the Netherlands and kept him there as a professor at Franeker.

The religious history of Friesland is well-documented as a rather gradual embrace of Protestant doctrine and practice until, by 1580, the Reformed church was given a privileged status in the province. Nevertheless, this official recognition by the state in support of the Reformed (“Belgic”) Confession did not mean that the Reformed church was completely unified internally or safe from the external threats of Rome or the growing number of sects. Consequently, the character of religious life in the Netherlands in general and Friesland in particular was diverse and dynamic, and recent scholarship has offered an important corrective to any illusion of a triumphalistic Reformed hegemony in the post-Reformation Netherlands. One scholar has projected that, despite

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5 See, for example, J. J. Woltjer, *Friesland in Hervormingstijd* (Leiden, 1962).

the favored status of Reformed Protestantism, Roman Catholicism remained extremely
common—perhaps entailing as much as forty percent of the Republic’s entire population
in the middle of the seventeenth century (depending, of course, upon just exactly how one
defines a “Catholic”). ⁷ Therefore, in some contrast with much of Protestant Europe
which broke from Rome very early, the Reformation only succeeded in the Netherlands
through the support of civil government very late in the sixteenth century ⁸, and
throughout the post-Reformation period the Reformed in the Netherlands were
surrounded by significant popular opposition to their imposed reforms.

Given these factors, the prominence of Sibrandus Lubbertus and his Reformed
polemics was indicative of the ethos in which Franeker’s Academy was established in
order to advance the Reformed cause in Friesland, the Netherlands, and far beyond
through the training of Protestant ministers who were sufficiently Reformed.

Originally, the vision for a school in Franeker was driven purely out of these
ecclesiastical interests in having properly trained clergy. Having permanently cast out
the Spanish and seized all of the regional buildings and property of the Roman Catholic
Church, Friesland—like the whole of the Netherlands—faced an urgent demand for
Protestant ministers. The regional church in Friesland therefore began laying the plans
for a theological academy, and it was decided that the now-abandoned cloister residing in

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⁷ See J. A. de Kok, Nederland op de Breuklijn Rome-Reformatie (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1964),
248. Cf. L. J. Rogier’s vast Geschiedenis van het Katholische in Noord-Nederland in de 16e en
17e eeuw, 3 vols. (Amsterdam: Urbi et Orbi, 1945-7), esp. 1:559-570 and 2:460-481.

⁸ In Friesland’s neighboring province of Groningen, it took until July of 1594 to finally expel the
last Spanish fortress, permitting the establishment of the “Gereformeerde religie.”
the heart of the city of Franeker (some 15 km west of the provincial capital of Leeuwarden) offered a favorable location. On July 29th of 1585 the academy formally opened its doors to great fanfare and celebration even though at the start the school had merely three faculty members and only a handful of students enrolled.9

Despite her humble beginnings, the Universiteit te Franeker10 rapidly grew to a prominence not unlike the University of Leiden in southern Holland. As the authors of a 400-year commemoration volume of this Frisian university present it, Franeker was at once both proudly regional and yet indisputably international in character.11 While the international character is evident in the celebrated theological faculty which in the first couple generations included scholars from such countries as England (William Ames), Germany (Sibrandus Lubbertus and Johannes Cocceius) and Poland (Johannes Maccovius), the records of student enrollment during Franeker’s first hundred years is even more indicative: hundreds of students from across the German border, 60 students

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9 In addition to Sibrandus Lubbertus, Martinus Lydius (1539-1601) and Henricus Antonides Nerdenus (or Henricus Antonides van der Linden; 1546-1614) rounded out the faculty, and in the first years they divided up the theological curriculum without significant specialization between them.

10 The Academy became a full-fledged university only in the seventeenth century, gradually establishing formal departments for languages, medicine, law, etc.

from England, 60 from France, 50 from Switzerland, 55 from Norway, 37 from Bohemia, 90 from Sweden, 190 from Poland, 195 from Denmark, and 300 from Hungary in addition to Scottish, Finnish, Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, and even Moroccan students rounding out the student body.12

While not all of these students studied theology, those who did were steeped in Reformed doctrine and exegesis of the Scriptures from the original languages as the school maintained both an outstanding academic reputation throughout Europe and a resolutely Reformed theological faculty and theological curriculum. As Jensma puts it, the Frisian academy “staat voor een militant calvinisme.”13 However, during the time of Protestant orthodoxy when confessionally Reformed institutions were cautious about academic innovations lest they lead to doctrinal compromise, Franeker saw a line of theologians with significant exegetical, philological and philosophical sophistication: thinkers such as Drusius, Maccovius, Cocceius, Witsius, and Vitringa. This has led at least one observer to remark that Franeker, while remaining orthodox, seemed to model a more “varied” kind of Calvinism.14 While some modern historians may be inclined to exaggerate the uniqueness of Franeker due to their presuppositions about a supposed stagnancy of the rest of Protestant orthodoxy in the post-Reformation era, the prolific publications, the ground-breaking theological ideas concerning philology and federalism,

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13 It “…stood for a militant Calvinism.” Universiteit te Franeker, 14. He continues on 17, “…de universiteit van start ging als een instelling van een uitgesproken calvinistische signatuur.”

14 This is the observation by Nijenhuis in Universiteit te Franeker, 228. He writes, “Ook in Franeker kende het calvinisme meer varienten en was het minder monolithisch dan de goedkoep populaire.”
and the Frisian’s school’s international fame all speak for themselves that Franeker is quite wrongly ignored or forgotten in the narrative of Continental European religious and intellectual history given its role as a center of seventeenth century Protestant learning within the European academy.\textsuperscript{15}

However, the glory of Franeker would not extend into the modern period of history. After a period of hardship for the institution (declining enrollment and regional isolation) during the late eighteenth century, the University of Franeker was permanently closed in 1811 as a part of the educational reforms ushered in by Napoleon throughout the regions of his conquest, and it was never subsequently reopened.\textsuperscript{16}

\textbf{Lubbertus in Context: A Theologian’s Biography}

While Lubbertus was a founding faculty member at Franeker (the first of Franeker’s great seventeenth century theologians), a participant in the Dutch “Golden Age” of scholarship and cultural advancement, and a man of considerable influence in both church and society in the Netherlands, he was a \textit{buitenlander}—a foreigner. He was born as “Sibet Lubben” in a northern German \textit{Dorf} called “Langwarden” in the region of

\textsuperscript{15}While one would hardly come to the conclusion of Franeker’s importance based on the majority of English secondary literature, there are signs that Franeker may be reappearing as a recognized center of post-Reformation scholarship. See Brian J. Lee, \textit{Johannes Cocceius and the Exegetical Roots of Federal Theology: Reformation Developments in the Interpretation of Hebrews 7-10}, Reformed Historical Theology (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009). Meanwhile, the fine archival collection of the Tresoar Historisch en Letterkundig Centrum in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands, continues to house the original library collection of Franeker’s university, accounting for the vast majority of that which is listed in the seventeenth century record of Franeker’s library—the \textit{Catalogus Librorum} (Franeker: Uldeicum Balck, 1626). Cf. \textit{De Franeker universiteitsbibliotheek in de zeventiende eeuw}, ed. L. Wierda, G. Jensma, J. M. M. Hermans, and J. van Sluis (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2007).

\textsuperscript{16}At present one can still easily locate the old university buildings at the corner of Vijverstraat and Academiestraat. They now serve as a nursing home.
Although he was German by birth and baptized in a Lutheran church, he was also East Frisian (Ostfries) insofar as he descended from the people who had inhabited these coastal regions of the North Sea for centuries. His own ancestors included several significant local magistrates for the region during the late medieval period, but there is no reason to think that Lubbertus was a noble by birth.

His family did have sufficient means to send him to the Latin School in Bremen at around age eleven, and it was there that he gave himself to the study of languages (especially Latin and Greek) and theology under the tutelage of Johannes Molanus between the years of approximately 1568 and 1574. Van der Woude, a biographer of Lubbertus who focused on his vast correspondence which has been preserved, suggests that Molanus desired Lubbertus to attend Heidelberg for a more decidedly Reformed theological education, but it was Lubbertus’ fellow students who prevailed in the decision, convincing him to depart for the University of Wittenberg instead. After two years in Wittenberg where he gave himself to a mastery of Hebrew in particular, Lubbertus continued in an academic pilgrimage through several other academies and universities where he studied under some of the greatest Protestant luminaries of the sixteenth century: Geneva (1576-1577), Basel (one month in 1577), and Marburg (1577-1578). Between 1578 and 1582, though, Molanus’ original hopes were finally realized,

17 C. Van der Woude, *Sibrandus Lubbertus, leven en werken: in het bijzonder naar zijn correspondentie* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1963), 19. Langwarden lies right along the North Sea approximately 20 km northwest of Bremerhaven and 60 km north of Bremen. Notable evangelical preachers in Langwarden during this period included Seba van Mandelshohe (1550-1561) and Iffe Sibrandi (1561-1576).

18 Van der Woude, 24.

19 Van der Woude, 27-29.
and Lubbertus enrolled at the “Casimirianum” in Neustadt, to which the Reformed theological faculty formerly in Heidelberg was forced to retreat following the death of Frederick the Pious and the imposition of the Lutheran confession throughout the Palatinate. Despite the setbacks for the Reformed in the region, Lubbertus’ course of study illustrates the concentration of Reformed theologians who carried the mantle of Reformed orthodoxy in Neustadt during these years. Lubbertus counted Zacharius Ursinus, Jerome Zanchi, Francis Junius, David Pareus, Daniel Tossanus, and Johannes Piscator among his teachers, colleagues, and friends at Neustadt. Based on various bits of correspondence from these men, it is clear that the respect was mutual; Ursinus evidently even singled out Lubbertus for his superior grasp of Greek and Hebrew compared to the other students, and thus Lubbertus was able to serve as an assisting instructor in Hebrew during his years in Neustadt.20

Having studied with a number of respected Protestant theologians from several different major universities approximately two generations after the Reformation itself, the young Lubbertus reflected many of the general characteristics of Reformed Protestantism in the 1580s. Intellectually, he was a scholastically-trained humanist. Theologically, he held to a Reformed creed and could point to both his personal friendship with men like Beza and Ursinus and his benefit from their instruction as indications of his orthodoxy. Ecclesiastically he was Reformed (at least by the end of his course of studies, having shed his early Lutheranism), and, along with virtually all of his Reformed contemporaries, he considered post-Tridentine Roman Catholicism a proven heresy and Lutheranism a disappointing and inconsistent compromise. Philosophically,

20 Van der Woude, 31-37.
he was eclectic according to the common patterns among those Protestants in the late sixteenth century who advocated a Christianized form of Aristotelianism.\textsuperscript{21} Vocationally, he was intent on an academic career, but he did not see this as excluding service in the church. Early in 1582, he found himself faced with a choice between ministerial positions offered to him in both Antwerp and Emden, and it was the counsel of Ursinus which convinced him to return to northwest Germany where he hoped to continue in the reforming work of Johannes a Lasco and (more recently) Menso Alting in Emden, an East Frisian port city which had served as a refuge for many persecuted Protestants over the years.

When Lubbertus arrived in Emden during Easter of 1582, he was still a very young man, and he was ordained into the ministry as the fifth pastor\textsuperscript{22} (a ziekentrooster, a “comforter of the sick”) at the congregation known as the Grosse Kirche, a citadel of Reformed orthodoxy along the North Sea. Yet, despite his congregation’s reputation, this first position threw him right into the middle of some of the enduring religious conflicts of post-Reformation German life. The East Frisian count, Edzard II, had sent the whole city into an uproar in 1577 by converting to Lutheranism and appointing the Lutheran Johannes Ligarius as preacher. These tensions lingered into the years of Lubbertus’ pastoral ministry as Edzard continued enacting regional reforms favorable to Lutheranism and insisting that the Reformed and Lutherans find a way to reunite.\textsuperscript{23} With his clear


\textsuperscript{22} The four ministers with whom he served at the Grosse Kirche in Emden included Menso Alting, Johannes Petrejus, Oyerus Althes, and Johannes Zuidlareus. Cf. Van der Woude, 39.

\textsuperscript{23} Van der Woude, 41.
Reformed credentials and his experience in theological disputation, Lubbertus assumed an important role during this time in advocating distinctively Reformed doctrine and practice among the churches of Emden and East Friesland.\(^{24}\)

On November 20, 1583, a representative of the States General (the governing body of nobles) of Friesland in the Netherlands arrived in Emden, delivering a letter which called Sibrandus Lubbertus to serve as a minister to the Frisian church (which was now officially Reformed as of three years earlier in 1580). The terms of the call were unusual in that they did not specify any particular congregation where he would minister, but it was clear enough that he would become a founding faculty member of the theological college which was about to be opened in Franeker. He departed for Friesland in the spring of 1584.\(^{25}\) The opening of the school in Franeker in 1585 and the awarding of the doctorate in theology to Lubbertus by the University of Heidelberg in 1587 officially marked his entrance into academia, and it was in academics that he remained and primarily labored until his death in 1625 in Franeker.\(^{26}\)

Over the course of these forty years of teaching in Franeker, Lubbertus’ significance evolved with the needs and interests of the school.\(^{27}\) In the early years

\(^{24}\) Van der Woude, 40-41.

\(^{25}\) Van der Woude, 48-49: “Het is meer dan waarschijnlijk, dat men bij de beroeping van Lubbertus, in hem tevens een kracht voor het te stichten seminarie heeft gezien.”

\(^{26}\) Incidentally, 1587 was also the year of his marriage to Geertruida (Truitje) van Oosterzee, with whom he only had one child—a daughter named Magdelina. There was one particular time when Lubbertus almost left Franeker, having been offered a position on the faculty at Heidelberg in 1596, but he declined this offer in order to stay in his adopted homeland in Friesland.

\(^{27}\) It is on this topic which so much of the Dutch and German secondary literature is at least interested if not unbiased. See, for example, Van der Woude, 371-430; E. L. Vriemoet, Athenarum Frisiacarum. 2 vols. (Leovardiae: Gulielmus Coulon, 1758) 1:1-19; Sprunger’s “William Ames and the Franeker Link to English and American Puritanism” in Universiteit te Franeker, 268; and Sprunger’s “Introduction” in The Learned Doctor William Ames.
Lubbertus represented the academic excellence and orthodoxy of the theological curriculum, but as Franeker grew into a full university and diversified more both in terms of faculty and students, he came to embody the conservative and “orthodox” wing of academic theology in the Netherlands and how these impulses were expressed in the church. Among the students at Franeker, Lubbertus was highly respected, and it was really only after the conflict over Johannes Maccovius’ supralapsarianism broke out (circa 1618) that Lubbertus gained the reputation of an aged disciplinarian toward those unruly segments on campus who were apparently under the influence of the Polish theologian’s questionable piety as well.28 In church life, Lubbertus was a prominent member of the old guard which tirelessly protected the Reformed church in the early seventeenth century from doctrinal error. The lasting impact of Lubbertus as a theologian is seen in both his lifetime of publications and his personal involvement in various ecclesiastical and social controversies, both of which spanned his lifetime of teaching at Franeker. It is these two aspects of Lubbertus’ career which we must therefore consider as we draw this short account of his biography to a close.

**Lubbertus’ Writings**

Sibrandus Lubbertus was a prolific writer, and his published treatises covered much of the broad terrain of post-Reformation theological controversies. As a professor at Franeker, Lubbertus incorporated frequent polemical asides into his lectures on dogmatic subjects, and—at the urging of certain colleagues—these polemical treatments in the classroom (initially aimed primarily at Robert Bellarmine in the years just after the

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28 On the controversy over Maccovius and supralapsarianism, see below.
Disputationes were published between 1586 and 1593) became the occasion for composing lengthy treatises for a broader audience. At Lubbertus’ funeral, Sixtus Amama’s oration fondly recounted his colleague’s ritual of rising at 3:00 a.m. to begin each day by writing on these matters of theological controversy. Whether this was entirely accurate or a bit embellished given the occasion of his colleague's funeral, it became part of the standard account of Lubbertus’ life after Amama said it. If true it would explain how he was able to regularly produce such lengthy works despite his growing responsibilities in other arenas of school and church as well.

Lubbertus’ first major publication was his 773-page *De principiis christianorum dogmatum libri septem* (1591), a treatment of the doctrine of scripture and various other matters of prolegomena. Following this, he attacked the authority of the papacy in 1594 with *De papa Romano*, which reached a total of 931 pages. The direct confrontation with Rome was very well-received by Lubbertus’ Protestant colleagues, such that, in 1596, he was offered a position teaching in Heidelberg which he apparently declined after a time of consideration. In 1595, Lubbertus co-wrote a brief book of church order for the newly-established Reformed Church in nearby Groningen, and then it took several

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29 Van der Woude, 67.

30 *De principiis christianorum dogmatum libri septem, scholastice & theologice collati cum disputationibus Roberti Bellarmini...* (Franekeræ: Aegidium Radaeum, 1591).

31 *De papa Romano, libri decem: scholastice & theologice collati cum disputationibus Roberti Bellarmini* (Academia Franekerana: Aegidivm Radaevm, 1594).


33 Menso Alting, *et. al. Christlicke und schriftmetige kercken ordenung : om alle desorder voor te comen, und eenicheyt, rust und vrede inde gereformeerde kercke, in der stadt und omlanden van Groeningen toe mogen onderhalten...* (Franeker: Gillis vanden Rade, 1595).
years before his next polemical treatise saw the light of day when he completed *De conciliis libri quinque* (1601)\(^{34}\), a 225-page response to Bellarmine’s treatment of church councils. His broader treatment of ecclesiology appeared in 1607 with *De Ecclesia, Libri Sex*\(^{35}\), a 430-page volume. Over the following two years, Lubbertus then entered into a published polemical exchange with Jacob Gretser, a Jesuit in Ingolstadt, who had attacked his lines of argument as found in his earlier works on prolegomena and the papacy.\(^{36}\)

While Lubbertus went on to teach and write for another fifteen years until his death in 1625, a certain shift is evident in his publications before and after 1609. Up to this point, he concerned himself almost exclusively with the refutation of Roman Catholicism as articulated by Bellarmine or those who defended Bellarmine like Gretzerius. At the time, this won him considerable respect from his contemporaries in the Protestant churches throughout Europe, and it established him as a formidable public opponent to Rome.\(^{37}\) The main biographical study of Lubbertus suggests that his goal

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\(^{34}\) *De conciliis libri quinque: scholastice & theologice collati cum disputationibus Roberti Bellarmini* (Genevae: Samuelem Crispinum, 1601).

\(^{35}\) *De Ecclesia, Libri Sex: Collati cum disputationibus Roberti Bellarmini* (Franekerae, Excudebat Aegidivs Radaevs, 1607).

\(^{36}\) *De principiis christianorum dogmatum: Replicatio ad defensionem primae controversiae Roberti Bellarmini scriptam a Jacobo Gretzero* (Franekeræ: Radaeus, 1608); *De Papa Romano: Replicatio ad defensionem tertiae controversiae Roberti Bellarmini scriptam a Jacobo Gretzero* (Franekeræ: Radaeus, 1609). Tutino’s book on Bellarmine describes why Gretser was selected by the Society of Jesus in 1604 to deliver this rebuttal. See Stefania Tutino, *Empire of Souls: Roberto Bellarmine and the Christian Commonwealth*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 122.

\(^{37}\) On this point van der Woude’s biographical study of Lubbertus is helpful in that it records some of the responses which Lubbertus’ writings received from his peers. Bonaventure Vulcanius, for example, wrote in glowing terms during 1598 about the service Lubbertus was offering the Protestant church after he published only his first two treatises, and he remarked that the “pious and learned men in France” were united in their anticipation of further volumes.
was to produce a complete refutation of all of Bellarmine’s *Disputationes*, and there may be evidence that he was nearing this point by the end of the first decade in the seventeenth century. His personal correspondence from the time makes reference to both his resolve to finish the project and it alludes to work on topics like “De Peccato” which never reached publication. Bonaventure Vulcanius, John Rainolds (Johannes Raynoldi) of Oxford, Jacobus ad Portum, and David Pareus of Heidelberg all wrote to Lubbertus in the course of 1606 under the impression that he was nearly done, encouraging him to bring it all the way to completion. Pareus wrote, “Ik houd niet op U te vermanen, broeder, met de weerlegging van Bellarminus’ controversen, waarmee ge met zo’n gespierde energie zigt begonnen, voort te gaan…. Gij, die de hand aan de ploeg hebt geslagen, hoe zoudt ge U nu terugtrekken?”38 Furthermore, the dedication to his 1611 treatise on Christology seems to imply that he was at that time very close to finishing this exhaustive response to the great Jesuit polemicist.39 Yet, for all of these indications that Lubbertus did produce a complete and exhaustive refutation of Bellarmine or come close to it, nothing was ever published, nor is there any remaining manuscript. Presumably Lubbertus either did not finish or he chose not to publish it for some reason.

It seems that from 1611 until 1620, though being very close to having that complete refutation of Bellarmine available, Lubbertus kept his polemical writings

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38 Van der Woude, 101-102. Pareus’ exhortation translates, “I should not have to remind you to progress, brother, concerning the refutation of Bellarmine’s Controversies, which you have begun with such spirited energy. How could you, who have already set the hand to the plow, now turn back?”

39 Van der Woude, 124. Cf. Lubbertus’ dedication of *De Iesu Christo Servator*. 
against Rome to a minimum\textsuperscript{40} and was instead drawn into a series of other theological and ecclesiastical controversies which forced him to essentially lay aside the project of responding in print to Roman Catholicism’s most feared polemicist in order to address matters plaguing the Reformed Church in the Netherlands on other fronts. The first of these necessary distractions during the second decade of the seventeenth century came in the form of Socinianism. In 1611, Socinianism was a development in Poland largely unknown to the Reformed theologians and churches in the Netherlands. Yet, it is certainly a tribute to Lubbertus’ good intuitions about the potential importance of this subject outside of Poland as well that he produced his 632-page polemical treatment of Christology, \textit{De Iesu Christo servator}, a work directed against Socinus himself which was also received to universal praise among his orthodox Protestant colleagues.\textsuperscript{41}

Other topics which Lubbertus addressed in printed polemical exchanges during these years were the controversies surrounding Conrad Vorstius (1569-1622) and Hugo Grotius (1583-1645). Vorstius was a Reformed theologian from the \textit{Gymnasium Academicum} faculty at Steinfurt (Germany) who was called to fill Jacob Arminius’ vacant chair at the University of Leiden in 1611.\textsuperscript{42} While the main issue was Vorstius’ orthodoxy on the doctrine of God and Christology as found in his recently published

\begin{footnotes}
\item[40] Among the few works published during this period which had bearing on Roman Catholicism without being a part of the larger project aimed at Bellarmine was his 164-page exchange with Peter Bertius on the topic of justification, \textit{Epistolica disceptatio de fide justificante deque nostra coram Deo justificatione habita inter...Sibrandum Lubberti...et Petrum Bertium...} (Delphis Batavorum: Joannem Andreae, 1612).

\item[41] \textit{De Iesu Christo servatore, hoc est, cur, & qua ratione Jesus Christus noster servatore sit, libri quatuor. Contra Faustum Socinum} (Academia Franekerana: Aegidius Radaeus, 1611).

\item[42] On the Vorstius controversy, see van der Woude, 198-258.
\end{footnotes}
The opposition to this appointment by various orthodox theologians and clergy spawned a minor international crisis over the following few years. Lubbertus first composed public letters to the Dutch States General and to the Archbishop of Canterbury in protest of the appointment of Vorstius, and then his exhaustive indictment of “Vorstianism” appeared when he published his 833-page *Commentarii ad nonaginta novem errores Conradi Vorstii*. The man at the center of this controversy apparently took notice at what Lubbertus was writing; during the course of 1614, Vorstius himself directed two separate rebuttals toward his adversary in Franeker.

Lubbertus’ involvement in some of the early theological and political controversies surrounding Hugo Grotius is closely related insofar as both Vorstius and Grotius were identified with the rising tide of Arminian (and even Socinian) tendencies in the Netherlands, and Grotius’ original attack on Lubbertus in his 1613 *Ordinum*...

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43 *Tractatus theologicus de Deo*, sive, de natura et attributes Dei (Steinfurt, 1611).

44 Cf. F. Shriver, “Orthodoxy and Diplomacy: James I and the Vorstius Affair,” *EHR* 336 (1970). The English were giving careful attention to the developments in the Netherlands concerning the state’s involvement in church matters and academic appointments. In the end, a number of English divines including the Archbishop of Canterbury were sympathetic to Lubbertus’ insistence on the limits of the state’s latitude in making appointments to theological positions on university faculties. Even King James I wrote in support of Lubbertus’ view in 1612 with *His Majesty’s Declaration Concerning His Proceedings with the States General of the United Provinces of the Low Countries, In the Cause of D. Conradus Vorstius*.

45 Franekeræ Frisorum: Vlrici Dominici Balck, 1613. Jocher also cites a work entitled *Declarationem responsionis & apologiae Conr. Vorstii pro ecclesiis orthodoxis*, but it is not referenced in the Lubbertus secondary literature nor is it extant in the major research libraries—both casting doubt on this citation.

Hollandiae ac Westfrisiae Pietas was written in light of how Lubbertus and the orthodox clergy were intruding into the Vorstius affair well beyond the proper boundaries of ecclesiastical power. Lubbertus’ 154-page answer (“Responsio”/”Antwoord”) appeared the next year, only to be subject to another volume of polemics and mockery from Grotius. While Lubbertus and Grotius represented the opposing parties of theological controversy in the early seventeenth century Netherlands, this dispute was less concerned with theology per se than it was a debate over ecclesiology and the right of clerics and theologians like Lubbertus to interfere in political matters. Grotius, of course, objected to the influence of Lubbertus and others on these issues of Dutch civic life.

The last of Lubbertus’ extant major writings is his Commentarius on the Heidelberg Catechism, which is based upon his lectures at Franeker on dogmatics. At over 800 pages in length and reflecting the scope of the Heidelberg Catechism in its interests, it is the closest thing to a comprehensive system of dogmatics which Lubbertus ever successfully produced. Moreover, this book was completed towards the end of his 40-year tenure on faculty at Franeker, offering some insight into what he considered the

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47 Ordinum Hollandiae ac Westfrisiae Pietas: ab improbissimis multorum calunmis, simulque a nupera Sibrandi Lubberti epistola...vindicate (Lugduni Batavorum: Johannes Patius, 1613).

48 Responsio ad pietatem Hugonis Grotii (Franeker: Rombertus Doyema, 1614). This also appeared in Dutch translation as Antwoord van Sibrandus Lubbertus op de Gods-dienstichet van Hugo de Groot (Franeker: Rombertus Doyema, 1614).

49 Bona Fides Sibr. Lubberti (Leiden, 1614). Fortunately for Lubbertus, the burden of responding to Grotius yet again was assumed by one of his friends in Franeker, Godefredus Sopingius, who published a short treatise entitled Godefredi Sopingii Apologetica responsio ad libellum anonymum qui vocatur Bona fides Sibrandi Lubberti et ad Hugonis Grotii pietatem / cui annexa est ipsa Bona Fides anonymi & vita auctoris (Franequerae: Romberti Dovema, 1616).

50 Commentarius in catechesin palatino-belgicam (Franicae: Joannes Lamrinck, 1618). See also the comments concerning the origin of this catechetical commentary in van der Woude, 372-373.
essential topics of dogmatic theology in this period of time during the post-Reformation era. Not surprisingly for one who knew and admired Zacharius Ursinus from his time studying with the Heidelberg faculty in Neustadt, Lubbertus carefully follows the structure, interests, and formulations of the catechism itself. Unlike all of his other major publications, though, the *Commentarius* stands as a positive statement of Protestant theology without a great deal of polemical concern beyond those polemical emphases which are quite obvious in the catechism as it was composed in 1563, in which certain disputed matters with Rome are given extended treatment—justification, sacramental theology, pure worship, and so forth.

Beyond Lubbertus’ published treatises, there are other historical documents where his theology is expressed, most notably his personal correspondence and his participation in various academic disputations at Franeker. The monograph by van der Woude, while to date offering the most exhaustive assessment of Lubbertus’ life and theology, is more specifically a study of his extensive epistolary correspondence, and the author is inclined to make sweeping statements about how Lubbertus influenced his many friends and acquaintances through these letters. 51 More recent work by Anthony Milton has suggested that Lubbertus’ correspondence even had a significant impact on the English Calvinists of the early seventeenth century, supporting van der Woude’s contention for the broad scope of Lubbertus’ influence. 52 Meanwhile, other documents record Lubbertus’ legacy at the university in Franeker—most notably, the extensive collection of

51 Van der Woude, 573-577.

disputations and theses conducted under Lubbertus which remains in the Dutch and English university archival collections (much of it having been compiled into an index as part of the 400-year anniversary of Franeker’s founding).\textsuperscript{53} Presiding over some 91 \textit{disputationes} between 1588 and 1624, Lubbertus on these occasions covered virtually all the \textit{loci} of post-Reformation Protestant theology with a particular emphasis on ecclesiology, sacraments, soteriology and anthropology, yet in these he even ventured into matters of exegetical and historical debate during these academic exercises, undoubtedly leaving a lasting impression upon his students from all across Protestant Europe who would have witnessed or participated in such events.

\textbf{Lubbertus’ Role in the Dutch Reformed Church}

As the discussions above have already illustrated, it is difficult to isolate Lubbertus’ churchly concerns and activities from his life’s work as a scholar. No doubt the same could be said of hundreds of other theologians from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; and yet in order to locate this Frisian theologian in the currents of intellectual history, we need to briefly consider his influence which often extended beyond the published polemical battles of the post-Reformation period. Some of these ecclesiastical roles were local or regional in scope\textsuperscript{54}; others were significant on the international scene of Protestant developments.


\textsuperscript{54} Van der Woude, 37-59.
Lubbertus’ time in Emden did leave a mark on the life of that community through his advocacy of Reformed practice in the face of the Lutheran-leaning Count Edzard II, but, as a late-coming junior minister in such a stronghold of Reformed tradition, his influence pales next to that of such noteworthy ministers in Ostfriesland as Johannes a Lasco and Menso Alting. However, the invitation to come teach in Franeker propelled Lubbertus to a high status in the northern provinces of the Netherlands—especially in Friesland and Groningen. Having left for Franeker in 1584, he made numerous contributions to Frisian church life during his four decades serving there. Although he was most directly and frequently active in the training of ministers for the region, he was also regularly consulted for matters of doctrine, ecclesiology, and discipline in the regional church. His biographer relates one memorable incident in 1596 when Lubbertus became involved in an investigation into the spread of Anabaptist fervor in Friesland, which discovered the subversive publication of some Anabaptist annotations upon the Bible in Franeker itself. As for the neighboring region of Groningen, it has already been noted that Lubbertus had a hand in helping to organize the Reformed Church in Groningen by co-authoring its first official manual of polity (kerkord) in 1595. His correspondence from the time reflects a continuing interest in the state of affairs in Groningen long after this as well.

While Lubbertus did not produce a great deal of published writings about the doctrine of predestination, his involvement in the Arminius controversy and subsequent

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55 Van der Woude, 89. Cf. Bergsma’s “‘Slow to Hear God’s Holy Word’? Religion in Everyday Life in Early Modern Friesland,” in Experiences and Explanations; idem, Tussen Gideonsbende en Publieke Kerk.

56 Van der Woude, 148-184.
participation at the Synod at Dort assure that his historical significance will always hinge in part upon how this international crisis in the Reformed church is understood and appreciated. While Lubbertus’ participation in the debate as a respected theologian and his infralapsarian fingerprint upon the canons produced in the course of the synod are both considerable, his contribution to this watershed event began much earlier. Van der Woude’s work on Lubbertus’ epistolary communication chronicles how the Franeker theologian was being consulted for his advice on how to handle Arminius as early as 1605. Therefore, he not only played a role in the synod in Dort from 1618-1619, but he also was instrumental in articulating the concerns and consolidating the support for the provincial synod in Den Haag in 1608. Balthazar Lydus reported in a 1607 letter to Lubbertus that Arminius himself did not really fear the opposition of anyone in the Netherlands so much as he feared the involvement of Lubbertus, who was able to refute Arminius’ sophisticated “philosophical subtleties.” Lubbertus’ Counter-Remonstrance posture remained consistent over the next ten years, and in 1619 he made his way to Dort to assure the right outcome in this synod which settled the Arminius controversy to the satisfaction of the Reformed orthodox.


58 Van der Woude, 151.

59 Van der Woude, 161-166.

60 Van der Woude, 153. Lydus writes to Lubbertus, “D. Arminus vreest U alleen, en anders niemand.”
However, Lubbertus was not merely a vocal critic of Arminian theology in his role before and during the synod in Dort; he also sought there to address the matter of supralapsarianism, which had of recent become a matter of great controversy on campus in Franeker through the teaching of his Polish colleague, Johannes Maccovius. The flare up over the lapsarian question had begun years earlier in the long standing conflicts with Maccovius, a junior faculty member in theology whose doctrine and piety were both found unacceptable to Lubbertus and thus became the source of continued tension at Franeker throughout the early 1620s. Yet the distrust and ill-will between the two theologians on faculty became a matter of public controversy in Franeker and beyond when in 1617 Maccovius oversaw the defense of fifty-six theses by Thomas Parker, an English theological student whose supralapsarian view of predestination seemed to explicitly make God responsible for sin by his eternal decree. Lubbertus responded by drafting together a collection of fifty errors either taken from Parker’s theses or set forth by Maccovius in the aftermath of the Parker controversy. The feud between Lubbertus and Maccovius with its ensuing disciplinary charges was addressed not only on campus among students and faculty but also in the church courts of the classis of Franeker, among the theological faculty of Heidelberg University, in the States of Friesland, and,

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finally, as an internal dispute of the orthodox Reformed at the Synod of Dort after they had completed their work in responding to the Remonstrants.

Ultimately, the synod supported the findings of a specially appointed committee which concluded that Maccovius’ view fell short of actual heresy and should be permitted within the bounds of orthodoxy, although he was cautioned against such excessive philosophical speculation which might be harmful to impressionable theological students. In the context of the synod’s use of infralapsarian terminology in correcting the Remonstrance, this appeared to be a significant triumph for Lubbertus despite the fact that this decision continues to be known by the rather dismissive appellation, the *causa particularis Frisica*—suggesting it to be a matter of merely regional interest among the other weighty matters determined by the synod’s international assembly.

By virtue of Lubbertus’ education, his writings, his academic leadership, his personal correspondence and his involvement in post-Reformation church life, he bears all the marks of an early modern humanist within the ranks of early Protestantism where he exhibited a scholastic methodology. Amidst his many scholarly accomplishments, though, none is more significant than his life-long project of responding to the polemics of Robert Bellarmine with his own Reformed polemics on authority in the church.

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State of the Problem, Part 1: Was Lubbertus just a polemicist?

In asserting that Lubbertus was a significant thinker in the post-Reformation period who advanced Protestant theology in a few critical areas by responding to the great Jesuit apologist Robert Bellarmine, there are several matters to address from the secondary literature which obscure the issue. First among these is the assertion that, as a polemicist, Lubbertus had no great theological significance whether considered in his own context or in the remainder of the post-Reformation era. Part of this problem is a misunderstanding of Sibrandus Lubbertus and part of it is a misunderstanding of the genre of polemics. Therefore it is necessary to respond to the charge frequently leveled or implied in historical references to Lubbertus that he was just a polemicist.

Though Lubbertus was a respected and influential minister and theologian during a forty-year stretch of the era of Protestant orthodoxy, to this date there are but a few references to him in either scholarly works or in popular theological literature, and even those which can be found are embedded in a number of methodological errors which

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64 As already mentioned, only Cornelius van der Woude has given monograph-length treatment to Lubbertus in his *Sibrandus Lubbertus, leven en werken: in het bijzonder naar zijn correspondentie*, but he restricts his study to Lubbertus’ preserved correspondence which consequently leaves significant gaps in addressing the theological writings and significance of the Franeker theologian. Treatments by Vriemoet, Tjaden, Reitsma, Boeles, van Schelven, and Sepp are helpful for some of their biographical information, but, as van der Woude points out, they tend to be either disinterested or dismissive of Lubbertus as a theologian, each subsequent work merely adding to the negative generalizations of the last, and most of these are apparently taken from the statements of Lubbertus’ opponents during the seventeenth century such as Scaliger, Episcopius, and Drusius. See van der Woude, *Sibrandus Lubbertus*, p. 562. More recent scholarly works by Rabbie (1994) and Bergsma (2004) are interesting in that they reflect a continuing interest in Lubbertus, but neither article does more than use the theologian as a foil for criticizing the Reformed orthodox during various seventeenth century Dutch ecclesiastical disputes.

65 In the English language, only that one short but noteworthy biography is found in Simon Kistemaker’s “Leading Figures in the Synod at Dort,” in *Crisis in the Reformed Churches*, 39-51.
effectively obscure the theology of the early post-Reformation era. While some (van der Woude and Kristemaker in particular) give Lubbertus excessive praise and others (especially van Schelven, Sepp, Rabbie, and Bergsma) subject him to endless criticism for his virtues (or faults, according to one’s view) which are hardly unique to him in the early era of post-Reformation scholastic orthodoxy, there is practically no engagement of his published theological treatises by any of these historians. Additionally, the dismissal of scholasticism and polemical literature for their negative connotations by essentially all of these writers ignores the reality that the scholastic methodology and even outright polemics were standard academic practices in the seventeenth century.

The first aspect of the “problem” which this dissertation will seek to remedy is the way Lubbertus is so often portrayed when he is dismissed as a mere polemicist who contributed more to the stagnancy of Reformed theology than to its advancement.66 Anti-Roman polemics were “the main theme of Lubbertus’ life,” writes van der Woude.67 Another scholar, reflecting on the role Lubbertus played in the theological character of


67 van der Woude, Sibrandus Lubbertus, p. 596.
Franeker, suggests that Lubbertus was “polemical by nature.” In the Biografisch Lexicon voor de Geschiedenis van het Nederlandse Protestantisme, van der Woude again highlights the defensive nature of Lubbertus’ theology, describing him as “een man met een heftig gepassioneerd karakter, van geref. levensovertuiging, die met de volle inzet van persoon en gaven zich heeft gegeven voor de bewaring van het reformatorisch erfgoed. Op theol. terrein ligt zijn betekenis meer in de verdediging van de oude waarheid, dan in het poneren van nieuwe gedachten.” This characterization has also been supported by more recent publications, including an essay by Edwin Rabbie, who portrays Lubbertus as a curmudgeon and a coward within the ranks of those who considered themselves orthodox. Bergsma’s 2004 essay, like all of his earlier published references to Lubbertus, also does little to challenge these widespread generalizations about Lubbertus’ significance.

68 “Veel polemisher van aard was de geleerde Sibrandus Lubbertus….” W. Nijenhuis, “Inleiding,” in Universiteit te Franeker, 1585-1811, p. 227.

69 See van der Woude, “Lubbertus, Sibrandus,” p. 144-145: He was “…a man with a strongly impassionate character from Reformed convictions who with full personal intentions gave himself for the preservation of the Reformation heritage. On theological grounds his significance lies more in the defense of the old truths than in setting forward new thoughts.” An older encyclopedia entry by van Schelven in the Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek (Leiden: A. W. Sijthoff’s uitgevers-maatschappij, 1911-37) attributes Lubbertus’ polemical success to his combative personality while affirming even less as to his theological significance: “Vast staat wel, dat hij verschillende slechte en voor de samenleving onaangename eigenschappen had; hij was gierig, slechts weinig beschaafd en driftig. Maar aan den anderen kant ontbraken toch ook de goede kwaliteiten niet, waarom hij dan ook door verschillende van zijn tijdgenooten hoog werd geacht.” Yet, he was “strijdlustig van aanleg,” and “zijn werken [zijn] ook in hoofdzaak polemisch.” p. 844, 845.


In a more popular presentation on Lubbertus’ significance in the context of the orthodox victory at Dort, Simon Kistemaker attempts to present him in a much more favorable light. However, such a short and superficial treatment provides no convincing reason to think of Lubbertus as an important thinker. He is merely praised for proving, by his active defense of the faith at Dort and his “irenic” efforts for unity at Franeker, that he was “a genuine disciple of John Calvin.”\(^{72}\) Presumably, Kistemaker is expressing his great approval of Lubbertus, but the categories he employs seem to obscure the actual significance of Lubbertus, and it is questionable if Lubbertus himself would have favored this description which so associated him with Calvin as opposed to catholic Christianity.\(^{73}\)

While it may indeed be true that the majority of Lubbertus’ published writings served a polemical purpose and that (based on his quotations of Calvin) he apparently appreciated the theological works of the Genevan reformer along with those of others who helped articulate the early systemization of Reformed doctrine, the extant literature on Lubbertus is not sufficiently nuanced to appreciate Lubbertus’ positive contributions to Reformed orthodoxy. In fact, by reducing his historical and theological significance to a role in “the defense of the old truths” as van der Woude does, the importance of his writings


\(^{73}\) \textit{De principiis christianorum dogmatum: Replicatio ad defensionem primae controversiae Roberti Bellarmini scriptam a Jacobo Gretzero}, 143 and 289.
is trivialized, and—more significantly—the whole era of early Protestant orthodoxy is somewhat obscured.

Lubbertus wrote polemical literature precisely because these matters were not entirely settled in his day and because polemical forms were the standard early modern choice for how to address differing points of view on such important issues. Although he lived several generations after the first generation of reformers like Luther and Zwingli, the recent publication of Bellarmine’s *Disputationes de controversis christianae fidei* (1587-1593) in the aftermath of the Council of Trent (1545-1563) posed the most serious intellectual challenge yet concerning the validity of the Protestant cause. Lubbertus’ treatment of Scripture, the church, church councils, and ecclesiastical authority—far from being irrelevant *genre* of academic theology—actually show that these were matters of continuing debate in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

Therefore, the question is not whether Lubbertus was a polemicist or a scholastic or an advocate of Aristotelian logic—all of which are clearly intended to be *pejorative* labels and *indictments* when the past literature on Lubbertus mentions them. Quite clearly Lubbertus was a polemicist who held to a scholastic methodology which at times appropriated Aristotle. Yet, he thought of himself not as a *mere* polemicist but as a Protestant (or Reformed) theologian doing the work of an apologist and controversialist. He writes in one place, “I will not withdraw myself from the defense of truth so long as

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74 Here I challenge the recent interpretation of polemical literature by F. G. M. Broeyer in his article, “Traces of the Rise of Reformed Scholasticism in the Polemical Theologian William Whitaker,” in *Reformation and Scholasticism*, ed. van Asselt and Dekker (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 155. See the further discussion in the following section.
God gives me life and good health…”  

Moreover, he pauses at the beginning of his first major work, *De Principiis*, to describe his own polemical style of writing. Using the scholastic conventions of his day, he made frequent use of syllogisms, and the fact that he appropriated Aristotelian categories for this enterprise should not suggest that Aristotle served as an equal authority as Scripture to him or anything of the sort.

The older scholarship on Franeker and early modern Frisian history, though, is quick to caricature Lubbertus as hot-tempered, arrogant, disagreeable, malicious and uncivilized apparently out of disapproval for the genre of theological polemics which Lubbertus wrote. This comes through in both Tjaden’s eighteenth century history of Friesland and in Vriemoet’s eighteenth century chronicle of Friesland’s illustrious university. It is supported by Boeles’ late nineteenth century work on Franeker and strongly stated in two other studies of the era: Sepp’s two volumes on theological

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75 In the foreword to *De Iesu Christo Servatore* (Franeker: Aegidius Radaeus, 1611), he writes, “…me non detrectaturum esse veritatem defendere, quamdiu Deus mihi vitam et firmam valetudinem concessurus est.”

76 *De Principiis*, 3.

77 See the tendency to generalize about Aristotle’s authority in, for example, van der Woude, p. 121. Compare this with the “Introduction” to *Reformation and Scholasticism* which among other things argues that “Aristotelianism” is not a helpful category concerning theological content and that syllogistic reasoning was only an academic convention and certainly not an accurate barometer of rationalism or doctrinal orthodoxy. In fact, the biographical study on Lubbertus by van der Woude is cited in that same essay as evidence for the broad trends of seventeenth century scholastic orthodoxy as typified in Lubbertus. Cf. Asselt and Dekker, *Reformation and Scholasticism*, p. 39, 27-28; Donald Sinnema, “Antoine De Chandieu’s Call for a Scholastic Reformed Theology (1580),” in *Later Calvinism: International Perspectives*, ed. W. Fred Graham (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1994), 159-190.

training in the Netherlands, and Reitsma’s history of the Reformed Church in Friesland.

It again appears in Galama’s 1954 study of the philosophy curriculum at Franeker as well as in Kuyper’s dissertation on Maccovius. Naturally, these negative assessments of Lubbertus’ person found their way into encyclopedia entries and biographical indexes as well as into the scholarly writings which make passing reference to Lubbertus without investigation into the primary sources or careful appreciation for his historical situation.

Insofar as Cornelis van der Woude’s dissertation is the primary modern interpretation of Lubbertus, it is important to note that this work both accepts such a negative evaluation of Lubbertus and advances similar conclusions which dismiss the importance of polemical exchanges in the seventeenth century theology. Accordingly, he dwells upon the supposedly feisty personality of Lubbertus, he stresses the time-bound character of Lubbertus’ writings, and he laments the Frisian’s consistency in defending typical old Protestant views while attacking the Roman Catholic theology of


82 “That long-forgotten Divinity Professor, Lubbertus of Franeker, was a master of intrigue, and pulled many strings on behalf of the Counter-Remonstrants.” In A. L. Drummond, *The Kirk and the Continent* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1956), 113.
Bellarmine. Ultimately all of this seems to belie his impatience with Lubbertus’ work as a polemicist.

Perhaps some of van der Woude’s dismissal of Lubbertus’ theological significance is related to his presuppositions about scholasticism—a method of scholarship which he personally finds “indigestible” (ongenietbaar), particularly in its characteristic use of syllogisms—a format he calls “sterile.” Typical of much of the twentieth century scholarship on the post-Reformation era, van der Woude suggests that Lubbertus’ theology was unduly colored by his Aristotelian logic which he allegedly followed slavishly from the Organon. While van der Woude uses these designations to imply certain rationalistic theological or philosophical views as well as certain aesthetic judgments about the unbearable tedium of the Franeker theologian’s theology, this is probably more revealing about van der Woude and the older scholarship on post-Reformation scholasticism than it is revealing about Lubbertus or any of his colleagues or opponents given that these were the standard practices of the time in which Lubbertus lived and wrote. While more recent scholarship has done much to overturn such a

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83 Explaining why it is unnecessary to divide his study of Lubbertus into two halves of life and work, van der Woude writes, “In de eerste plaats zou een aparte behandeling van de werken van Lubbertus weinig interessant zijn. Lubbertus’ opvattingen waren traditioneel bepaald. Hij week slechts in een enkel opzicht af de gangbare orthdoxe opinies. Het was veeleer zijn eer, een verdediger van het orthodox gevoelen te zijn, en hij had van niets zo’n hartgrondige afkeer als van “novititates.” Een aparte behandeling van zijn werken zou neerkomen op een weergave van de oude, gereformeerde dogmatiek.” Van der Woude, 16-17.

84 Van der Woude, 72, and 371-378.

85 Van der Woude, 121 and 571-572.
prejudice against scholasticism simply for his methodology\textsuperscript{86}, this antipathy towards scholasticism and polemics remains the dominant reaction to Lubbertus in the literature.

It should be credited to van der Woude though that he thinks Lubbertus has been unfairly slandered during two hundred years of scholarship on Franeker, and it is part of the burden of his monograph to overturn his older caricature.\textsuperscript{87} As he points out, most of the negative portrayals of Lubbertus by Reitsma, Sepp, Kuyper, van Schelven and others are merely repeating the assessment of earlier works like Vriemoet, and these earliest histories of Franeker seem to uncritically take these negative assertions about Lubbertus from those theologians Lubbertus opposed—Lubbertus being in good company with the vast majority of the orthodox Reformed theologians who criticized figures such as Scaliger, Episcopius, and Drusius for their theological innovations.\textsuperscript{88} If this dependency upon the slanderous descriptions of Lubbertus' theological rivals is the case, it is no wonder he has been frequently portrayed as disproportionately argumentative and combative—one’s opponents in debate always seem this way!

This point is worth belaboring since Wiebe Bergsma, a contemporary historian at the Frisian Academy in Leeuwarden, has written several things in recent years concerning Sibrandus Lubbertus, and Bergsma’s preoccupation with Lubbertus’ supposed polemical temperament obscures his interpretation of what happened in Franeker and throughout the Netherlands. For example, he begins one article with the

\textsuperscript{86} Cf. R. S. Clark and Carl Trueman, eds., Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999); also W. J. van Asselt and Eef Dekker Reformation and Scholasticism.

\textsuperscript{87} Van der Woude, 8.

\textsuperscript{88} Van der Woude, 8, 567. Sepp, for example, follows Drusius in calling Lubbertus “the most unreasonable” of the Franeker faculty. Sepp, 135.
assertion that Lubbertus was “…one of the most combative (strijdlustige) and intolerant (onverdraagzame) Reformed people of his time,” and the remainder of the article speculates as to how he could possibly maintain a friendly correspondence with someone less orthodox like Bonaventura Vulcanius in Leiden. Having started with an obscured picture of Lubbertus’ personality and his work in polemics, his conclusion (in this case, concerning the prevalence of insincere and self-serving friendships among early modern Dutch humanists) is quite unhelpful. Nor does it amount to much more than empty slander when he repeats Eekhof’s judgment that Lubbertus was “one of the ugliest men of his time.” This distorted picture of Lubbertus and his context is also found in Bergsma’s *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation* article on Lubbertus, where he describes him as “severe Calvinist” who was nevertheless a leading theologian and scholar in post-Reformation Europe.

While much of the current secondary literature takes offense at Lubbertus’ role as a polemicist, occasionally he benefits from being compared with someone allegedly even more scholastic and polemical, as when Postma and Veenhof analyze the confrontation with Johannes Maccovius concerning supralapsarianism before concluding that


Maccovius was unduly philosophical and abstract in his theology while Lubbertus rightfully maintains a more biblical “tension” in his view of election. Yet, what would be more helpful would be to understand Lubbertus, Maccovius, and the rest of the early seventeenth century Protestant and Catholic polemicists within their proper context without making moral or psychological judgments about those who engage in polemics if it was in fact an acceptable and even laudable practice in the early modern Academy.

State of the Problem, Part 2: Secondary literature on Roman/Protestant polemics.

If the first aspect to the state of the problem has to do with how Sibrandus Lubbertus as an individual controversialist has been portrayed in over two hundred years of writings, the second aspect concerns how polemics in general have been either misrepresented or practically ignored for the post-Reformation era. The historical theologian, through observation of the theological literature of this era, finds that after the appearance of the major creeds and confessions in the mid-sixteenth century (which defined the various Protestant traditions such as the Reformed, Lutheran, etc.), the exchange of theological argument and literary attacks between Roman Catholics, and Protestants does not end. Rather it enters a time of greater fervency now under clear definitions of doctrinal differences while many of these polemicists themselves benefit from the social and political protection of regional Protestant or Roman Catholic

92 Postma and Veenhof, “Disputen Omtrent de Predestinatie,” p. 249-263

93 Noteworthy exceptions to this rule can be given, however, for each of these areas: polemics (Broeyer, Donnelly, Perrottet, Richgels, and Troeltsch), prolegomena (Muller, Olson), ecclesiology (de Jong, Maruyama), and even post-Reformation developments in conciliarism (Hall, Nugent, and Raitt).
establishments in which they reside. Meanwhile, though, many standard surveys of Protestant theology seem quite oblivious to this reality of the post-Reformation church.\footnote{For example, see I. A. Dorner’s *History of Protestant Theology: particularly in Germany, viewed according to its fundamental movement and in connection with the religious, moral, and intellectual life*, trans. George Robson and Sophia Taylor, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1871), which jumps straight from Calvin to Arminius.}

Those who do comment on the role of polemics, such as Troeltsch and Scharlemann, offer some constructive insights into its historic significance.\footnote{Ernst Troeltsch, *Vernunft und Offenbarung bei Johann Gerhard und Melanchthon* (Gottingen: Vandenhoec & Ruprecht, 1891); Robert P. Scharlemann, *Thomas Aquinas and John Gerhard* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964).} Yet many works on historical theology are content to ignore the genre or dismiss its importance for the Christian tradition as it seems too unpleasant. Therefore, part of the reason Lubbertus is misunderstood is due to the widespread failure among modern historical theologians to appreciate the genre of theological polemics.

Although recent decades have seen a number of historical and theological studies which have sought to present Protestant and Reformed scholasticism on its own terms and without the perfectly evident prejudice of earlier historiography, there remains work to be done in appreciating the different forms which scholastic theology assumed. Polemical writings, which are generally discussed in surveys of the early magisterial Reformation (Luther, etc.), are too often neglected exactly when they both increase in volume and in sophistication in the time of early orthodoxy and high orthodoxy.\footnote{Cf. van der Woude, p. 66-67, 72. The major post-Bellarmine Protestant apologists include also William Whitaker, David Pareus, Daniel Chamier, Johannes Rainolds, Jacobus Kimedoncius, Lambertus Danaeus, Sutcliffe, and Franciscus Junius such that Eef Dekker (following Sommervogel) notes that over 200 separate refutations of Bellarmine appeared in print in the post-Reformation era. “An Ecumenical Debate…,” in *Reformation and Scholasticism*, 142.} A number of scholars are beginning to make this observation, and yet for most of them they
state this with more narrow interests related to a particular person, region, or conflict. Maruyama, for example, offers some context for the writings of Theodore Beza on ecclesiology: “In the second half of the sixteenth century, the Catholic-Protestant polemics had retained their old vigor. More and more, ecclesiology had become the central issue in this polemical arena. In the post-Tridentine era, particularly, the visible, institutional aspect of the church was the primary concern of both camps.”

The work of F. G. M. Broeyer on William Whitaker also seeks to place his polemical works within a period of church history characterized by disputational, controversial, and polemical writings. He correctly notes the presence of “a veritable avalanche of polemical literature” in the late sixteenth century, and he carefully situates the works of Whitaker within this milieu. However, his assessment of the polemics of scholastic Protestantism is not altogether pleasing when he offers a problematic interpretation of the motives of those who engaged in polemics.

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99 Most importantly, Broeyer interprets the rifts in the church as being irreparable such that polemical exchanges had more to do—perhaps everything to do—with public image rather than genuine intentions to persuade or overcome divisions. In his article on Whitaker, he comments that Whitaker was primarily interested in proving he was correct or John Calvin was correct over and against Robert Bellarmine. Nevertheless, he is perceptive enough to see that the methodology of scholastic post-Reformation polemics was the occasion for development in exegetical and historical arguments for the Protestants, so perhaps he is not altogether consistent in how he evaluates Whitaker’s anti-Roman writings. See “Traces of the Rise of Reformed Scholasticism…,” 155, 179 and then 155-156, 158-168, and 178-180.
Much of the work of J. P. Donnelly is sensitive to the prolific and prolonged polemics between Protestants and Roman Catholics in the post-Reformation era. He has made the case that one cannot adequately understand this time in church history without appreciating the distinct genre of polemics as a productive and respectable form of scholastic theology even if, and he correctly points out, the word “polemics” has been demonized to our modern sensibilities.100

The foremost historian of Dutch Catholicism, L. J. Rogier, has documented an extraordinary amount of information about the relationship between the Protestants and Roman Catholics in the early modern period of Dutch history. While his interests are primarily social trends rather than theological arguments, he notes that the high tide of Protestant-Catholic polemics was the middle of the seventeenth century (not the sixteenth!), and he remarks that it was often the most celebrated Protestant theologians of the university faculties across northern Europe who participated in these published confrontations—for example, Voetius, Lubbertus, Hommius, Ames, Baronis, Rivet, Trigland, Maresius, and Episcopius to name a few. He also records how these controversies at times erupted in local confrontations as in Den Bosch (Voetius vs. van Engelen and Jansen) and in Haarlem (Trigland and Rivet vs. Marius, Ban and Brugge).101

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Perrottet has written an article about the response of the Reformed theologians Franciscus Junius and Lambert Daneau to Robert Bellarmine, giving particular attention to their polemical responses to the portions of the *Disputationes* on the topic of tradition’s authority by these two celebrated francophone Protestants from the post-Reformation period. While helpful on this particular exchange, it fails to situate the controversies in a broader theological and ecclesiastical context.

On the opposite shore of the English Channel the same conflict raged between Roman Catholics and Protestants during the same period, and the recent monograph of Anthony Milton—while restricted in interest not only to the country of England but to the *Church of England*—lends support to the call for updated scholarship by noting that anti-Catholic controversialist works have been generally ignored by historians. He also points out that Bellarmine not only provoked a few larger and more significant reactions by such English Protestants as Andrew Willet and William Whitaker but even inspired a whole sub-genre of Protestant theological literature. Some of the chapters of this study highlight several important but poorly understood themes in post-Reformation polemics: anti-popery, the debate over the “true church,” and the importance of Protestant continuity with the church before Martin Luther, and the first generation of Reformers.


104 Milton, 15.
As such, it remains an important work of corrective scholarship in understanding the polemical context in the Church of England.

One notable exception to this pattern of more narrow studies which observe the importance of post-Reformation polemics is the breadth of vision in Richard Muller’s work, which also presents controversial writings as an important contribution to the post-Reformation scholastic matrix.\textsuperscript{105} As it is the proverbial exception which proves the rule, Muller’s work underlines the importance of the polemical genre as an expression of post-confessional theology which held a great deal of significance to those who were writing on behalf of the church and the academy between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries even if twentieth century historians did not emphasize this.

In contrast, much has been written in recent years about the progressive nature of religious tolerance during the seventeenth century “Golden Age” in the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{106} Yet the methodology of these studies tends to focus on the events of religious conflict and tolerance without explaining them in light of the explosion of polemical literature during these precise time periods. Therefore, again there is an unfortunate gap in the extant historical literature even when it touches upon related matters of religious history in the post-Reformation period.


Although this study is examining the polemical treatises of Sibrandus Lubbertus on authority in the church, the third significant hurdle in accessing this topic is the fact that—whether or not the sub-genre of polemical literature is considered—the secondary literature on post-Reformation Protestant theology in general and post-Reformation ecclesiology in particular is still a bit thin. There are, of course, exceptions for particular theologians or particular topics addressed by certain thinkers, and the work on matters of prolegomena is far better represented that the subject of ecclesiology.\(^\text{107}\)

assessing the post-Reformation thought on matters related to the church, to date there is very little secondary literature which offers a comparative assessment of tendencies and watershed influences for matters of ecclesiology after the middle of the sixteenth century. While several extant monographs are helpful for accessing the broader issues of revelation, scripture and hermeneutics in the post-Reformation era—all of which are relevant for a discussion of church authority—\textsuperscript{108} in the context of confessional polemics after Bellarmine, these things are difficult to isolate from essential matters of ecclesiology, namely, who has the authority to teach, interpret, or enforce doctrine and discipline in the church.

There are also pervasive methodological problems in the historical literature on the ecclesiastical writings of the era. Some of the monographs which should have the most overlap with an analysis of the writings of Lubbertus on the church end up being merely a plea for twentieth century ecumenical concerns rather than a useful piece of historical theology. For example, de Jonge’s study of Junius’ ecclesiology (Junius, incidentally, wrote polemical treatises on the church in response to Bellarmine and maintained a close friendship with Lubbertus) is more interested in painting this theologian as an exceptionally irenic figure who is a corrective to the harsh early Protestant ecclesiology of John Calvin.\textsuperscript{109} While certain observations by de Jonge about Junius’ writings and context are helpful, they are buried beneath anachronistic labels and

\textsuperscript{108} See especially the first two volumes of Muller’s \textit{PRRD} for the Reformed context and R. D. Preus’ works on scripture in the Lutheran tradition.

\textsuperscript{109} Christiaan de Jonge, \textit{De Irenische Ecclesiologie van Franciscus Junius (1545-1602)} (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1980).
contemporary (twentieth century) ecumenical concerns, both of which obscure the true picture in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The confusion and misrepresentation of the current secondary literature about post-Reformation ecclesiology is made worse by the failure to connect the polemics over the true church with the simultaneous effort to join confessionally divergent churches in a post-Reformation ecumenical council or even a truly “catholic church” which would readmit the Protestants into the fold with Rome if certain agreements were established. On the one hand, historians like Broeyer have argued that the ecclesiastical polemics of the post-Reformation Reformed had no interest in serious examination of the breach with Rome.  

On the other hand, the monograph on Georg Calixt’s ecclesiology by Hermann Schussler shows how there were genuine efforts to heal confessional divisions between Protestants and Roman Catholics in the seventeenth century, but this becomes a plea for the contemporary (twentieth century) ecumenical movement rather than an historical analysis of ecclesiology. Neither approach to post-Reformation ecclesiology explains the writings of Sibrandus Lubbertus (to be detailed later, especially in the fifth chapter on church councils) which use polemics to push for an ecumenical council which would be binding for both the Protestant side and the Roman side of the Reformation’s divide. Yet again, the extant secondary literature fails to explain the major events and writings of Lubbertus’ lifetime where it ought to be most helpful in at least situating the Frisian theologian if not detailing his direct role in these post-Reformation developments.


The Significance of the Topic

Although Lubbertus has often been dismissed as a mere polemicist, this dissertation will hold that he was actually a very significant constructive theologian who worked in a context of heated polemics to advance several aspects of Reformed theology, especially through a refutation of the Jesuit Robert Bellarmine and his *Disputationes de controversis christianae fidei*. Since one major lynchpin in the dispute with Roman Catholicism was the matter of where authority in the church is actually located, this specific question will be the crux of my study, but this will require an exploration of several distinct but related matters of prolegomena and ecclesiology on which Lubbertus also wrote in the course of his efforts to rebut Bellarmine: the doctrine of Scripture, the interpretation of Scripture, the nature of the church, the leadership of the church, and the process for settling theological controversies in the courts of the church. In the relevant passages of Lubbertus’ treatises, he uses careful scholastic methodology and a polemical style of refutation for the sake of protecting the Reformed church from the threat posed by the counter-Reformation apologists. This study will also seek to emphasize that the matters of ecclesiology which are often assumed by the older scholarship to be settled by the opening decades of the seventeenth century instead remained rather open questions (as evidenced in Lubbertus’ treatises) upon which the somewhat precarious future of the Protestant cause hung.112

Lubbertus illustrates a posture towards Rome which was far more common than most seventeenth century historical scholarship seems to suggest, and his writings indicate

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112 For an overview of the rather tenuous situation for the Reformed churches in the sixteenth century, see Philip Benedict’s *Christ’s Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism*, especially chapters 3 through 7.
he was both unique as an historical figure and similar to other theologians of his time in ways which deserve study. As a polemicist, his major works were part of the avalanche of polemical literature which emerged after the appearance of Bellarmine’s *Disputationes*. Within that context, he illustrates the close relationship in the post-Reformation era between the doctrine of scripture, the methods of seventeenth century Protestant hermeneutics, and Protestant ecclesiology. These polemical writings include significant expressions of continuity with the great theological minds who preceded him (Luther, Calvin, Beza, Whitaker, etc.), and they also reveal Lubbertus’ great influence upon his Reformed contemporaries as well as on those later seventeenth century Protestants who continued to argue that they rather than Rome embodied not only orthodoxy but true catholicity. Lubbertus also shows that, while a Reformed theologian writing in the early seventeenth century could believe that Rome was a false church and her council at Trent an illegitimate council, he could also make provision for supporting the idea of a truly ecumenical council which would span the chasm of the Protestant Reformation by making declarations upon the authority of Scripture and noting a continuity with the settled dogma of previous church councils.

By making the case that Sibrandus Lubbertus was a great and influential polemicist on the topics of Protestant prolegomena and ecclesiology in the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth centuries, this dissertation supports the further claim that he was one of the more important Reformed theologians in the post-Reformation era—a significant assertion in light of the virtual absence of any past scholarly assessment of his life and significance in the English language. He provided desperately needed ecclesiastical leadership for the

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113 Van der Woude, 129-130.
Dutch Reformed churches during some of their earliest years and most formative controversies: the establishment of regional churches and theological education in Groningen and Friesland, the response to Bellarmine during the high tide of the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation, the spread of Arminian thought, and the growing challenge of Socinianism’s heresy. In fact, van der Woude provocatively suggests that Lubbertus’ opposition to Bellarmine was an essential cause for consolidating the fracturing Dutch Reformed church during the Arminian crisis. Lubbertus also helped shape the character of Continental Reformed theology during the period of early orthodoxy—particularly at Franeker which was one of the intellectual centers of European Protestantism for the following two centuries. Concerning the mark left on Lubbertus’ own school, the theological academy of Friesland (which soon became a full-fledged university), van der Woude judges that “Hij heeft gedurende de eerste kwarteeuw een stempel gezet op het theol. onderwijs te Franeker.” As for Lubbertus’ influence upon parish ministry in the Reformed Church during the Golden Age of the Netherlands, Sixtus Amama could state that his Commentarius on the Heidelberg Catechism—the summation of his years of lecturing upon dogmatics at Franeker—was so popular in 1625 that it was “in the hands of

114 Van der Woude suggests that Lubbertus was pivotal in bringing international attention to both the errors of Jacob Arminius and to the heresy of Socinianism—two of the great landmarks of seventeenth century religious history.

115 Van der Woude, 104.

116 See Universiteit te Franeker, 1585-1811, 227-231.

117 van der Woude, Cornelius, “Lubbertus, Sibrandus,” in Biografisch lexicon voor de geschiedenis van het Nederlandse protestantisme, vol. 1, ed. D. Nauta (Kampen: Kok, 1978), 144. Translated: “He has left his stamp upon the first quarter century of theological instruction at Franeker.”
all.”¹¹⁸ In hindsight, it is also significant that Lubbertus was among the first to offer an orthodox Protestant response to Bellarmine since this was an emerging genre of theological literature which among the later controversialists often drew from earlier polemicists like Lubbertus.

Lubbertus and his polemics are also important because his various doctrinal contributions which were taken up or developed by others. His argumentation against Bellarmine and the Romanists (and, for that matter, against the Remonstrants and the Socinians as well) provided theological material for the growth of the larger seventeenth century systems of Reformed doctrine. For example, Lubbertus helped to establish the pattern for Protestant prolegomena and ecclesiology which undermined the polemics of Rome while also implying a distinctively Reformed conception of the divinely appointed means for ordering the church through the word of Scripture and the ministry of the Holy Spirit both at work in the governance of the church. The later Reformed systematizers of High Orthodoxy (1640-1725) also clearly benefited from his polemical contributions in producing their own their more intricate and mature full-scale dogmatic systems while some—notably, Hoornbeeck and Turretin—even completed massive theological systems of a purely polemical nature.¹¹⁹ The details of Lubbertus’ writings often touch upon matters which, if not controversial in his day, would later become controversies in the

¹¹⁸ Sixtus Amama, Sermo Funebris habitus post exequias Sibrandus Lubertos (Franeker, 1625); cf. van der Woude, Sibrandus Lubertos, 377-378.

¹¹⁹ See Hoornbeeck’s Summa controversiarum religionis (1653) or Turretin’s Institutio theologiae elencticae (1679-1685) which was recently translated and republished as Institutes of Elenctic Theology, 3 vols., trans. Giger, ed. Dennison (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1992-1997).
Reformed Church, raising the question as to whether he also posthumously touched the course of Protestant theology. ¹²⁰

**Methodology and Survey of Chapters**

Methodologically, this dissertation in historical theology will balance attention to the primary sources of Lubbertus’ polemically-oriented anti-Roman theological writings with an evaluation of the relevant secondary literature on Lubbertus himself, the post-Reformation response by the Reformed to Bellarmine and the counter-Reformation, and the developments in ecclesiology and prolegomena in the era. ¹²¹ Relevant secondary literature on the social history of the period will be consulted to appreciate the historical circumstances which made these matters so significant and/or controversial during the time in which Lubbertus wrote.

At times the lack of extant secondary literature (noted above) will be obvious as Lubbertus’ theology is explained in a sort of isolation from other research since it is simply not to be found at present. While this is not an ideal way to research historical theology or any other field of history, it is occasionally the only way forward while new frontiers (in this case, Protestant polemics and seventeenth century ecclesiology) are

¹²⁰ For example, van der Woude records some of Lubbertus’ correspondence with Antonius Walaeus concerning the modes of justification and purification in the Old Testament, and Lubbertus asks whether the Levitical purity codes reflect “een andere ‘modus’ van verzoening” in the Old Testament. This could signify an important antecedent to the later Dutch Reformed debates over *paresis* and *aphesis* by Johannes Cocceius and Johannes Voetius. Van der Woude, *Sibrandus Lubbertus*, 492-493. On the points of contention in the Cocceian-Voetian conflicts, see Brian J. Lee, “Biblical exegesis, federal theology, and Johannes Cocceius: developments in the interpretation of Hebrews 7:1-10:18.”

¹²¹ See the pattern set forth in James E. Bradley and Richard A. Muller’s *Church History: An Introduction to Research, Reference Works, and Methods* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).
being explored and presented for the response of others. If others are able to offer correction or nuance to this monograph in future research, perhaps this initial work will at least remain valuable for its effort in blazing the trail in which others will undoubtedly follow with greater understanding.

The goal is to present the ideas which Lubbertus wrote, insofar as it is possible, on their own terms and according to their contemporary significance. Therefore, while there is no particular theology or ideology being advocated through this dissertation, it will be necessary to detail the post-Reformation antipathy between Protestants and Roman Catholics as these are historical realities without which so much of the literature in the early modern Europe has no meaning. Polemical terms (e.g., “papist,” etc.) therefore appear in the discussion below as they are quoted in the materials, but this should not be interpreted as advocating any position concerning which polemicist was ultimately correct. This study is intended to be descriptive in its historical character without being prescriptive in its theological interests.

The arrangement of this dissertation is admittedly subjective to some degree, but the progression of chapters is designed to most fully explain the particular emphases of Lubbertus’ polemics while also offering chapter-length topical studies which might serve the research interests of other church historians. Conveniently, Lubbertus himself tended to write his polemical treatises within the broad topical divisions found in the traditional loci of dogmatic theology. Therefore, after an initial chapter on Robert Bellarmine’s polemics and the Protestant reaction to Bellarmine (chapter 2), the next three chapters reflect both the loci in dispute between Lubbertus and Bellarmine (prolegomena,
ecclesiology, and church councils—in this order) as well as the separate treatises which the Franeker theologian published.

The best place to begin an analysis of Lubbertus’ writings is with a look at his theological prolegomena, to which his *De Principiis* (1591) corresponds (chapter 3). There are several polemical works which Lubbertus wrote on ecclesiology, so the next section (chapter 4) will address ecclesiology as a general topic with significant attention to *De Ecclesia* (1607) and some assessment of the relevant portions of *De Papa Romano* (1594). Since, of Lubbertus’ writings, *De Conciliis* (1601) is most concerned with the issues of church authority in reference to the hotly-debated matter of church councils, it will be the most important text to analyze in this whole study of Lubbertus even though its consideration (chapter 5) is reserved for the end in order to set it in its historical and theological context. In order to appreciate the developments in Reformed theology during this time, representative works by a few earlier Reformed theologians and some of Lubbertus’ contemporaries will also be compared in order to determine what was new and what was appropriated from others in Lubbertus’ efforts to explain the authority structures of the church in his own context.

The conclusion (chapter 6) seeks to bring together some observations about what Sibrandus Lubbertus accomplished in the course of these writings and how they help us to better understand some of the Protestant theology in the post-Reformation period. Beyond the appraisal of the historical significance of these several disputational works which took aim at Rome, there will be a modest survey of Protestant polemics after the death of Lubbertus with some suggestions as to where he left an enduring mark among the later Reformed dogmaticians and polemicists.
CHAPTER 2: BELLARMINE’S IMPACT IN PROTESTANT QUARTERS

Bellarmine as Apologist for the Roman Catholic Church

The tone of Protestant-Roman Catholic polemics gradually changed over the course of the sixteenth century. Following the initial rift during the first generation of Protestants, the most significant development for the polemical climate coincided with the Council of Trent (1545-1563), which for the Catholics\(^1\) officially repudiated Protestant doctrine and affirmed Catholic dogma on the central issues of the Protestant Reformation. With the judgment of an ecumenical council complete, the Roman Catholic Church and the pope in particular now welcomed the internal development of a full scholastic elaboration of those Catholic positions which had been settled at Trent. Meanwhile, Trent also became the occasion for a great deal of Protestant response through preaching, teaching, and writing which now not only took aim at individual Catholic leaders and writings but laid the charge of heresy against the united voice of a Roman Catholic church council complete with papal approval. Both in respect to internal development and in respect to the external apologetics and polemics which were necessary due to the Protestant polemical attack, Robert Bellarmine was the single most important thinker and writer of the Counter-Reformation. Therefore, we shall have a

\(^1\) The use of “Catholic” as the conventional nomenclature to refer to what was *Roman Catholic* in the post-Reformation period is used here for simplicity. The Protestants of this era, though, regularly sought to reclaim the term “Catholic” for *themselves* as opposed to what they called “Romanist” or “Papist.” Although Lubbertus would therefore disapprove of my terminology, I hope the reader is more forgiving.
much better context to appreciate the polemical theology of Sibrandus Lubbertus if we begin with a brief look at Bellarmine, the greatest figure in the Counter-Reformation and the particular one to whom Lubbertus and many other Protestants could direct their polemics to substantiate Protestant and/or Reformed doctrine in the post-Reformation era.

Roberto Francesco Romulo Bellarmino was born in Montepulciano, Tuscany, in 1542. While his rise to academic and ecclesiastical prominence was due in no small part to his earnest piety and natural intelligence, it helped to have family connections such as his maternal uncle Marcello Cervini degli Spannochi, who became Pope Marcellus II for about one month during 1555. Bellarmine’s studies brought him to the Jesuit Roman College, the University of Padua, and the Jesuit College in Louvain (Leuven) before he was appointed to teach theology for the Jesuits first at Leuven (1570-1576) and later at the Roman College where he held the pope’s newly created chair of controversial theology (1576-1588). The lectures from his time in Rome became the basis for his monumental *Disputationes de controversiis Christianae fidei adversus huius temporis haereticos* (3 vols., 1586-1593). His career also included a stint as a papal legate, several years as an academic administrator for the Roman College, and the appointment to serve as the Archbishop of Capua (1602-1605), having been made a cardinal in 1599.

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2 Ingolstadt, 1586-1593. It is now commonly known as the *Controversies*, but in this study the name "*Disputationes*" is also used. James Brodick, in his *Robert Bellarmine, Saint and Scholar* (London: Newman Press, 1961), writes, “At length, Robert began to be inundated with requests for the publication of his lectures, and some enthusiasts even went so far as to threaten that if he did not soon comply they would take the law into their own hands.” (p. 59-60). A complete edition of the *Controversies* with Bellarmine’s own corrections was published several years later in Venice (1596), and over the past few centuries it has seen at least twenty new editions.

His towering status as the foremost of the Jesuit apologists for Catholicism’s Counter-Reformation is how the post-Reformation Protestants generally knew him, but his legacy of popular devotional writings and his impact on sixteenth and seventeenth century social concerns were both considerable. It is primarily these other interests (as opposed to his theological polemics against Protestants) which are reflected in the major modern historical studies of his long and productive life.4

Bellarmine’s scholastic methodology in the Controversies and his other polemical writings presented a direct challenge to the Protestant doctrine of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. First, he showed an impressive acquaintance with both the major first generation Reformers (e.g., Luther, Melanchthon) and many of those in the second and third generations later in the sixteenth century whether Lutherans, Reformed, or Radicals (e.g., Calvin, Vermigli, Beza, Flacius, Brenz, and Chemnitz were all frequently cited).5 This first-hand knowledge of Protestant theology allowed him to give very

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4 See A. Mancia’s “Bibliografia Bellarminiana nel novecento” in Roberto Bellarmino: Arcivescovo di Capua teologo e pastore della riforma cattolica (Atti de convegno internazionale di studi Capua 28 settembre – 1 ottobre, 1988), ed. Gustavo Galeota (Capua, 1990), 809-872; Peter Godman, The Saint as Censor: Robert Bellarmine Between Inquisition and Index, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought, vol. 80 (Leiden: Brill, 2000); and Richard J. Blackwell, Galileo, Bellarmine and the Bible (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991). Again, the Tutino monograph Empire of Souls deserves special mention for its interest in Bellarmine’s social and political setting, but it is not to the exclusion of interest in Bellarmine’s theological writings which often correlate with the political controversies of the period.

5 A great deal of quantitative information about Bellarmine’s cited opponents is found in R. Richgels, “Robert Bellarmine’s Use of Calvin in the Controversies: A Quantitative Analysis” (Ph. D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1973); idem, “The Pattern of Controversy in a Counter-
pointed exegetical or theological attacks (sometimes in the form of syllogisms) which carefully demonstrated how the Protestants fell short of Roman Catholic dogma or were otherwise open to refutation. Out of some 7,100 citations of his Protestant adversaries in his *Controversies*, a narrow majority concern Lutherans, but the single most frequently refuted individual was John Calvin, with over 1,600 references. In the *Controversies*, Bellarmine also occasionally capitalized upon the significant differences among the Protestant theologians themselves if it served the polemical interests of recounting, for example, how a Lutheran theologian might critique and ridicule a Reformed thinker on some issue which divided the two Protestant camps, such as the theology of the sacraments. Elsewhere Bellarmine objects to the literal meaning of Protestant humor, satire, or exaggeration in order to question the general credibility or factuality of his opponents’ writings when they set their sights upon the Catholics. By giving so much attention to the actual writings of major Protestant theologians, Bellarmine offered a more formidable critique than the earlier Catholic apologists who quite clearly did not take the time to understand all the views they wanted to dismiss; as the one appointed by the pope himself to undercut Protestant arguments, Bellarmine made no such mistake.


7 Cf. Richgels, “Scholasticism,” 62. While Bellarmine’s rhetorical strategy is an interesting glimpse into early modern polemics and print media during the sixteenth century, Richgels seems intent on showing how this substantiates a conflict not just between Protestants and Catholics but between scholasticism and humanism in general—a questionable thesis which makes Richgels’ work seem quite dated in its conclusions.
Bellarmine also, in good scholastic fashion, understood the polemical value of history. He therefore makes frequent reference in his *Controversies* to the most respected of the church fathers, including Augustine and Jerome in particular. While this appeal to history is not his only objective in argument, it provides a strong rhetorical defense when linked to exegetical and dogmatic proofs.

The end result of Bellarmine’s lectures and their published form as the *Controversies* was to present Roman Catholicism with a new complete system which articulated and defended the faith in the age of the Protestant Reformation. The older systems were neither methodologically adequate nor sufficiently current to the issues of the Counter-Reformation to offer such a thorough response. As one historian remarks of Bellarmine’s *magnum opus*, “Intended as an answer to the theology of Reformation, it differs from previous polemic and apologetic documents, such as those written by Pighius and Tapper, mainly by presenting a new system, a *Summa*, which was meant to replace the older scholastic works. It was Rome’s answer to Reformed theology, as this had gradually developed into a scholastic theology.”

The positive content of Bellarmine’s theology is so extensive that it is perhaps more suited to a monograph than it is to concise summary, but his theological system does revolve around only a few fundamental doctrinal commitments, especially ecclesiology and the doctrine of the sacraments. For this reason, Dietrich’s dissertation

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8 Dietrich, *Theologie*, 141.


10 Willem van ’t Spijker, “Reformation and Scholasticism” in *Reformation and Scholasticism*, ed. van Asselt and Dekker (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 89.
on his ecclesiology, *Die Theologie der Kirche bei Robert Bellarmin (1542-1621)*, is as good an entry point as any in the secondary literature for summarizing the theology of this great Counter-Reformation apologist.  

As this work shows, the issues of ecclesiology, prolegomena and soteriology are all interconnected for Bellarmine in a post-Tridentine expression of divine authority revealed in and through the Roman Catholic Church and her visible head, the pope. Dietrich therefore continually returns to the topic of divine authority whether in the church’s recognition of Scripture’s canon, the church’s authoritative interpretation of Scripture, or the papacy. His summary of what this means for church councils in Bellarmine’s thought also remains closely tied to the Jesuit’s views on ecclesiology and prolegomena. Before turning attention to the Protestant response, we ought to separately address in some form each of these subjects which lie at the heart of Bellarmine’s theology and at the forefront of the response to Bellarmine by Lubbertus and the other Protestant apologists.

When Robert Bellarmine writes about Scripture, he clearly seeks to reclaim a high view of both the original inspiration and the continuing authority of the written word of God. However, he deviates from the Protestants rather sharply in his defense of the origin of Scripture (*verbo Dei scripto*) from that larger body of revelation in the tradition

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12 See Dietrich, *Theologie*, 78-84, 86-92, 115-144, 159-190, 254-258, 268-310, 380-460, and 503-504. Only a short passage (104-106) addresses how these issues of authority are expressed in polemical works, but this obscures the reality that the whole system of the *Controversies* is tied to polemics.

of the church (*verbo Dei non scripto*). Therefore, tradition is both chronologically and authoritatively prior to Holy Scripture, and this explains why the Catholic Church logically must have the right to define the canon of the written word of God and then offer her own interpretation of it and her testimony in its support.

In the context of the sixteenth century, Bellarmine’s interests in affirming the authority of Scripture, apostolic continuity (according to his definition of tradition), and the possibility of a believer’s complete certainty in what God has revealed all parallel the hallmarks of early Protestant prolegomena, where scripture’s authority is direct (and not derived from tradition’s priority), where apostolic authority assures correct interpretation (*i.e.*, through the analogy of faith), and where the *testimonium ecclesiae* is superseded by the *testimonium internum spiritus sancti*. Yet this parallel makes no concessions to the Protestants on the matters over which they disagree since it ties a high view of Scripture to the continuing role of church tradition and the papal office in particular. As an effective polemicist, Bellarmine sets forward his own view in contrast to his opponents, but he seems to do so with the full intention of claiming both the doctrinal high ground of Scripture’s authority and the pastorally useful assertion of a believer’s confidence in its

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rightful interpretation—all rooted in his ecclesiological assumptions as a faithful Roman Catholic, to which we can direct our attention next.

Ecclesiology was the defining issue of the sixteenth century. 16 Nowhere was this more evident than in the polemics of the later sixteenth century, including the writings of Robert Bellarmine. His Roman Catholic ecclesiology, of course, emphasized the institutional organization of the church under the pope as the body of Christ and the one rightful manifestation of the kingdom of God on earth. Membership in the body of Christ as Bellarmine defines it is to be within the domain of the sacramental ministry of the Roman Church and thus in fellowship with the papacy. Just as the body has a soul, so also the Church is indwelt by the Holy Spirit in a parallel fashion. 17 In the Controversies, he belabors the point that the pope is head of the universal church as well as the necessary head for every congregation which Christ forms. 18 These notions were precisely what the Protestants rejected, but this did not impede a vigorous debate throughout the post-Reformation period on the topic of ecclesiology and its related issue of the authority of church councils.

The issue of church councils was, to say the least, a very hot topic of the Catholic-Protestant polemics in the post-Reformation period. For the Catholics it was a matter of

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16 Tadataka Maruyama, The Ecclesiology of Theodore Beza (Geneve: Droz, 1978), 159: “In the second half of the sixteenth century, the Catholic-Protestant polemics had retained their old vigour. More and more, ecclesiology had become the central issue in this polemical arena. In the post-Tridentine era, particularly, the visible, institutional aspect of church was the primary concern of both camps.”


vindicating the outcome of Trent and maintaining Catholic discipline under the papacy; for Protestants it was the way to undercut Trent’s authority and potentially unite even confessionally diverse Protestants (Reformed, Lutheran, etc.) against the heresies they associated with Rome. Bellarmine therefore devotes a great amount of attention to the ecclesiology of councils, whether they are local councils, provincial councils, national councils or general/ecumenical councils. The last of these categories, general councils, he says is distinguished through being called by the pope, led by the pope or his appointed substitute, and attended by Catholic bishops from throughout the whole world unless they are legitimately hindered. Following these criteria, he counts eighteen authoritative ecumenical councils throughout church history, starting with Niceae (325) and stretching up to Trent (1545-1563). The rest are either rejected in part or in whole.

In Bellarmine’s ensuing treatment of general councils he first addresses whether they can err when they are legitimately called and approved, and after this he relates such councils to the authority of other “principia” of the church—namely, the authority of sacred Scripture and the authority of the papacy. Citing several important Protestant writings which insist on the fallibility of some Catholic general councils that have

19 Quarto Controversa, Part 1, Bk. 1, ch. 4, p. 24. Elsewhere he clarifies that the pope needs to ratify their conciliar pronouncements as well in order to be authoritative.

20 Quarto Controversa, Part 1, Bk. 1, ch. 5, p. 25-35.

21 Quarto Controversa, Part 1, Bk. 2, ch. 1-11, p. 100-150.

22 Quarto Controversa, Part 1, Bk. 2, ch. 12-17, p. 150-170.

23 Luther’s De Conciliis, art. 28-29; Brentius’ Confessione Wittenbergensi; Calvin’s Institutes, 4.9.8.
received papal approval, Bellarmine holds the opposite view that they cannot err.\(^{24}\)

Moreover, he continues, the general council’s authority is neither above nor below that of Scripture or the Roman See since the pope as the head of the church is the guardian of tradition and the only one who can officially preside over an ecumenical council and its declarations.\(^{25}\) In other words, there is no conflict between the supreme authority of a general council and the supreme authority of the papacy or even the written word of God in the Scriptures.\(^{26}\) As a head cannot act against the body of which it is a part, so also the pope cannot act against nor be condemned by a general council to which he is spiritually united as head once he has taken the office once filled by the apostle Peter.\(^{27}\)

The earliest Protestants like Luther had pressed the point that, just as emperors had called ecumenical councils in the past, civil rulers should be able to call ecumenical councils in a time such as the sixteenth century since the papacy itself was one of the primary issues dividing Christendom. Bellarmine offers several arguments against this proposition which he says Luther so eloquently (diserte) expressed. First, even as John Calvin wrote in the \textit{Institutes}, Bellarmine concurs that the only general council which is

\(^{24}\) \textit{Quarto Controversa}, Part 1, Bk. 2, ch. 2, p. 101: “Catholici vero omnes constanter docent, Concilia generalia a summo Pontifice confirmata errare non posse, nec in fide explicanda, nec in tradendis morum praeceditis toti Ecclesiae communibus.”

\(^{25}\) On the pope either directly or indirectly presiding at a general council, see \textit{Quarto Controversa}, Part 1, Bk. 1, ch. 19, p. 77-87. Concerning the view of his opponents, Bellarmine writes, “The heretics of our time teach that ordinarily the emperor must be the one presiding at a council, or someone sent by him, or, if no one is sent, then the same council appoints someone.” (p. 77) Cf. Calvin, \textit{Institutes}, 4.7.1-2.


\(^{27}\) \textit{Quarto Controversa}, Part 1, Bk. 2, ch. 14, p. 156-159.
legitimate is that one which “gathers in Christ’s name” and where he has no rival presiding.  

Whereas the Reformers understood the council gathered in Christ’s name to be one led by the word of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Bellarmine calls this “uncertain and vague” (ambiguum et obscurum), potentially allowing almost anyone to claim they have assembled a legitimate ecumenical council in Christ’s name. Only the pope can gather a church council in Christ’s name since this is part of his office. 

Furthermore, Jesus told Peter among all of his disciples and believers to “Feed my sheep,” suggesting that the one who follows in Peter’s Seat (and not the emperor) is the only one who can call a council. While emperors have called some ecumenical councils in the past, Bellarmine quickly adds that the popes have called many more, and only the Roman Catholic pope can call a council which is truly ecumenical.

As for the delegates of an ecumenical council, Bellarmine assumes that these would primarily be bishops in ecclesiastical union with the papacy, but there are two additional points which Bellarmine advocates over and against the Protestants. First, he insists on the propriety of papal legates in attendance, but he scoffs at the idea set forth by Luther, Brenz and others that some learned men (i.e., teachers, elders) would be full

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29 Quarto Controversa, Part 1, Bk. 1, ch. 12, p. 51: “…congregari in nomine Christi, nihil aliud esse, quam ab eo congregari, qui habet a Christo auctoritatem congregari.”

30 Quarto Controversa, Part 1, Bk. 1, ch. 12, p. 51-51, 56.
delegates though they are neither bishops nor prelates.\textsuperscript{31} Also, Bellarmine argues that these delegates in council are acting \textit{as judges}.\textsuperscript{32}

**The Response to Bellarmine by Post-Reformation Protestant Theologians**

Given the perceived threat of Robert Bellarmine, there was a flood of Protestant responses among Lutherans and the Reformed for the remainder of the post-Reformation period (certainly through at least the close of the seventeenth century). However, two faults in the vast majority of the modern secondary literature need to be pointed out before this Protestant reaction is described. First, the Protestant-Catholic polemics of this post-Reformation era are regularly ignored as though they were mere republications of exact arguments which erupted prior to Luther’s excommunication. Second, if these post-Reformation polemical exchanges are mentioned at all, they are routinely judged by the modern historian to be either barbaric and vicious or at least impious and unloving—all of which leave behind the goal of dispassionate evaluation in order to express the particular historian’s distaste.

Nevertheless, a minority of the historians studying this period has always held that these Protestant-Catholic polemics ought not to be treated as a scapegoat for contemporary moralizing but as a once respectable theological genre, and one which played an important role in the development of Protestant theology, especially in the

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{31} Quarto Controversa, Part 1, Bk. 1, ch. 15, p. 61-66.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{32} Quarto Controversa, Part 1, Bk. 1, ch. 18, p. 73ff.}
fallout after Bellarmine. For instance, consider the comments of Willem van ‘t Spijker as he describes Protestant polemics as the final period of what he sees as the four distinct stages of Reformed thought in the sixteenth century:

The fourth period...provides us with a document from Roman Catholic theology, which was to occupy the theological world for many years: Bellarminus’ *Disputationes de Controversiis* (1586). In this work, Bellarminus fought the Reformation, its representatives, and its dogmas in such a thorough manner, that Reformed theologians were still trying to refute his work years afterwards.

While van ‘t Spijker somewhat uniquely argues that the Protestant reaction to Bellarmine could be justifiably called a distinct period in the development of Reformed Orthodoxy, several other well-known scholars have spoken of Bellarmine as an undeniably important crucible for Protestant thought. Troeltsch long ago asserted that polemics had a very positive role in the development of Protestant orthodoxy. Preus also acknowledged that polemics served a good and necessary role for the dogmatic and ecclesiastical development which took place in the Lutheran tradition. Willem J. van

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34 The first period van ‘t Spijker describes is the reaction to medieval Roman Catholic scholastic theologians for about two decades (until the middle of the 1530’s); the second period is the following two decades in which the Reformation developed its educational institutions; the third period includes the rapid development of confessionallization and official political toleration or support (from the 1550’s to the 1570’s); and van ‘t Spijker’s fourth period is the growth of Protestant scholasticism in reaction to Bellarmine.

35 Willem van ‘t Spijker, “Reformation and Scholasticism,” 89.


Asselt speaks of Bellarmine as perhaps the most important of the “external factors” which drove the development of Reformed Scholasticism during the period of Early Orthodoxy: “Door bij deze uitwerking gebruik te maken van het in de loop van eeuwen steeds verder verfijnde scholastiek instrumentarium, ontwikelde men een theologisch systeem dat uitmuntte door precisie van gedachteformulering.” In fact, it was expected that any truly orthodox and reliable theologian would prove himself by specifically composing a book or treatise against that most feared of Jesuit polemicists: “Almost every Reformed theologian of any reputation wrote a refutation of Bellarmine.” Having worked through the rigor of the Controversies, many Protestant theologians were then able to make more careful and subtle theological distinctions in their expansion of Protestant theology according to the standards of seventeenth century scholasticism.

With so much concern for Bellarmine and his Controversies it is not surprising that some two hundred separate Protestant refutations of Bellarmine appeared in the

38 Van Asselt, Inleiding, 96: “De belangrijkste was negatief van aard en betrof de polemiek met Rome...vooral kardinaal Robertus Bellarminus....”

39 Van Asselt, Inleiding, 97. Translated: “Through making use of these developments over the course of centuries they developed yet further refined scholastic instruments [and] a theological system that excelled in precision of thought formulation.”

40 “Bijna elke gereformeerde theoloog van naam schreef een weerlegging van Bellarmine....” Van Asselt, Inleiding, 97.

41 Cf. Richard A. Muller, “The Problem of Protestant Scholasticism—A Review and Definition,” in Reformation and Scholasticism, ed. van Asselt and Dekker (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 61: “...Protestant orthodoxy felt the need to answer the polemics of a highly developed Roman Catholic scholastic theology. The careful critique levelled by Bellarmine, for example, resulted in a demonstrable refinement of Protestant orthodox theology and, as one aspect of the refinement, an explicit recourse to the older scholastic tradition and its theological distinctions.” Note that this interpretation of Protestant polemics, discussed above in the introductory chapter, challenges many of the generalizations offered by F. G. M. Broeyer in “Traces of the Rise of Reformed Scholasticism in the Polemical Theologian William Whitaker (1548-1595),” in van Asselt and Dekker, ed., Reformation and Scholasticism, 155.
century following the original publication of the *Controversies*. Each of these Protestant writers not only had access to Bellarmine’s works (perhaps because they owned them) but they also considered these Romanist heresies to be an imminent threat in each of their particular countries, regions, churches, and time periods. It is thus remarkable that these refutations and polemical exchanges continued for so long in so many different places—quite the contrast from the impression often given that “Protestant countries” had moved on after the divisions of the early sixteenth century.

Anthony Milton’s study of the Protestant-Catholic tensions in early seventeenth century England helpfully places Sibrandus Lubbertus—a favorite like-minded Continental Reformed polemicist among the English Protestant theologians—within this context of reaction to Bellarmine:

…the polemical conflict prompted international Protestant co-operation. In the 1590’s, this took the form of the international Calvinist response to the controversial works of the Jesuit Robert Bellarmine. The main Calvinist controversialists—Sibrandus Lubbertus, Franciscus Junius, Daniel Chamier, and Lambert Daneau—were in close contact with the English divines engaged in the same task of refutation, at first chiefly John Rainolds and William Whitaker.

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42 This is the round figure which was given by Brodrick in 1961 and is occasionally mentioned in subsequent literature (e.g., Woude and Dekker), all of these appealing to Sommervogel’s *Bibliotheque de la Compagnie de Jesus* (Brussels/Paris, 1890), 1:1165-1180. Cf. Brodrick, 75; Eef Dekker, “An Ecumenical Debate between Reformation and Counter-Reformation? Bellarmine and Ames on *liberium arbitrium*” in *Reformation and Scholasticism*, ed. van Asselt and Dekker (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 142; and van der Woude, *Sibrandus Lubbertus* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1963), 574.

43 Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought 1600-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 399. Lubbertus’ writings against Bellarmine are listed in the introductory chapter of this dissertation. Junius wrote *Animadversiones ad controversiam primam Christianae fidei: de Verbo Dei scripto et non scripto*... (Leiden, 1600) and *De Ecclesia, libellus singularis* (Petrum Sanctandreanum, 1602). Chamier’s polemical works against Bellarmine include his *Delphinatis Panstratiae Catholicae, sive, Controversarium de religione adversum Pontificios corpus* (Genevea: Roverianis, 1626). Daneau wrote *Ad Roberti Bellarmini disputationes theologica*... (Geneva: Le Preux, 1596). Rainolds (Reynoldus) wrote *Sex theses de sacra Scriptura & Ecclesia* (Hanoviae: Guilielmum Antonium, 1603) as a polemical mix of exegetical, dogmatic, and historical arguments aimed at Bellarmine and Stapleton, remaining in regular correspondence with his Frisian colleague.
While C. van der Woude (Lubbertus’ twentieth century biographer) was not primarily researching the polemical aspect of Lubbertus’ context, he also gives a similar list of the most noteworthy early responses to Bellarmine: in England, William Whitaker; in Germany, David Pareus; in France, Daniel Chamier; and Sibrandus Lubbertus in the Netherlands. These two historians helpfully draw attention to the earliest and most influential responses to Bellarmine, but we will see below that much more could be said about the extent of this “international Calvinist response” (Milton’s phrase).

William Whitaker requires particular attention at this juncture because of his chronological priority and his personal influence on Lubbertus and the other early anti-Bellarmine polemicists. Whitaker was the first to write any major public critique of Bellarmine’s *Controversies* when, having seen a student’s handwritten notes from Bellarmine’s original lectures at the Roman College, he sought to refute them through his lectures at Cambridge in the year 1586 (the very year Bellarmine published the first edition of the *Controversies*!) and soon after published this refutation as *Disputatio de sacra Scriptura* (1588). Whitaker also wrote this work to refute the other popular Roman Catholic polemicists, Edmund Campion and Thomas Stapleton, and most of his

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**Footnotes**

44 See his *In Roberti Bellarmini Disputationes* (Heidelberg, 1612-1615) or *Roberti Bellarmini Politiani Societatis Iesu Theologi Cardinalis*, 6 vols. (Heidelbergae: Jonae Rosae, 1612-1615). See the footnote above for Whitaker and Chamier.

45 Van der Woude, 66.

subsequent writings continued to focus on offering a refutation to Bellarmine and the other well-known Roman Catholic polemicists of the era.\textsuperscript{47}

Whitaker’s forceful writings against Bellarmine influenced and characterized the posture of many Protestant thinkers for the next several decades; this of course brought reactions not only from other Protestants but also from the leaders of Counter-Reformation as well. In a recent study of early Jesuit publications J. P. Donnelly playfully quotes some of Whitaker’s more colorful polemical language to a presumably Roman Catholic contemporary reading audience in order to explain just how concerned he (Whitaker) and the rest of the Protestants were after the appearance of Bellarmine’s \textit{Controversies}.\textsuperscript{48} Bellarmine had become the most feared voice of the early modern period for Protestant theologians.

Having described the major polemicists against Bellarmine, the reason for so many other published polemical responses (as we said, approximately 200) is because there were both lesser-known Protestant polemicists\textsuperscript{49} who joined in this war of words and many well-known post-Reformation theologians who wrote anti-Bellarmine works in addition to their books more widely remembered today. The category of lesser-known Reformed polemicists who directly attacked Bellarmine would certainly include Jacob

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{47} In his dissertation, Broeyer describes how the conflict (\textit{strijd}) with Rome was “het hoofddoel van Whitaker’s leven.” Broeyer, 182.
\item \textsuperscript{48} Donnelly, 	extit{Jesuit Writings of the Early Modern Period, 1540-1640}, 144. Donnelly, recalling Whitaker’s accusations, writes, “...Despite Bellarmine’s belonging to ‘the Jesuit swarm of papist locusts,’ he seemed ‘an invincible champion, as one with whom none of our men would dare to engage, whom nobody can answer, and whom, if anybody should hope to conquer, they would regard him as an utter madman.’”
\item \textsuperscript{49} They are, of course, only \textit{lesser-known} to us as we are separated from them by several centuries; a significant proportion of them were widely known and acclaimed scholars in their own time.
\end{itemize}
Kimedoncius⁵⁰, Andreas Chrastovius⁵¹, Festus Hommius⁵², Joannes Strangius⁵³, Jean Mestrezat⁵⁴, Nicolas Vignier⁵⁵, Guillaume Rivet⁵⁶, Johannes Scharpius⁵⁷, John Denison⁵⁸,

⁵⁰ See his Brevis repetitio ex verbo Dei doctrinae catholicae ecclesiarum Palatinatus (Heidelbergae: Harnisch, 1593).


⁵⁴ De la communion a Iesus Christ au sacrement de l’Eucharistie. Contre les Cardinaux Bellarmin & du Perron (Sedan: Jean Janon, 1625).

⁵⁵ Theatre de l’Antechrist: auquel est respondu au cardinal Bellarmin, au sieur de Remond, à Pererius, Ribera, Viegas, Sanderus et autres qui par leurs escrits condamment la doctrine des eglises reformees sur ce subiet (La Rochelle: Nicolas Vignier, 1610).

⁵⁶ Disputationum theologarum repetitarum 62a, De quinque falsis sacramentis pontificiorum... (Leiden: Jan Jacobzoon Paets, 1601).


⁵⁸ De confessionis auricularis vanitate: adversus Cardinalis Bellarmini sophismata, et de sigilli confessionis impietate, contra scholasticorum, & neotericorum quorundam dogmata disputatio (Oxonii: Ioannes Lichfield, 1621).
Francis Bunny, Matthew Sutcliffe, Gabriel Powel, Thomas Morton, Lancelot Andrewes, John Gordon, Henry Care, George Tullie, Thomas Brightman, George

59 A survey of the Popes supremacie: VVherein is a triall of his title, and a proofe of his practices: and in it are examined the chiefe argumentes that M. Bellarmine hath, for defence of the said supremacie, in his booke of the bishop of Rome (London: Valentine Simmes, 1595).

60 De catholica, orthodoxa, et vera Christi ecclesia: libri duo. In quorum primo pseudoecclesiae Romane ecclesiae Catholicæ persona, qua multos miseris mortales multos iam annos ludificata est, detrabitur: ... In vtroque omnis illa Bellarminis de notis ecclesiae disputationi, eiusdemque, & reliquiorum contumeliosissime, & mendacissima in ecclesiam nostram. ecclesiae nostre non-nulos claros viros scripta, imagines, & conuitia variē sparsa refelluntur (London: Barker, 1592); idem, Matthei Sutlivii adversus Roberti Bellarmini de purgatorio disputationem (London: George Bishop, 1599); idem, De missa papistica, varijsque synagogæ Rom. circa Eucharistiae sacramentum erroribus & corruptelis, aduersus Robertum Bellarminum, & vniuersum Iebræorum & Cananeerorum sodalitium (London: Adam Islip, 1603); idem, De pontifice Romano, eiusque injustissima in Ecclesia dominatione, aduersus Robertum Bellarminum, & vniuersum Iebræorum et Cananeerorum sodalitium (London: George Bishop, 1599).

61 Disputationum theologicarum et scholasticarum de Antichristo & eius Ecclesia (Heidelberg, 1604; London: John Windet, 1605).


63 Responsio ad Apologiam cardinalis Bellarmini (London: Barkerus, 1610).

64 Antitortobellarminus, siue Refutatio calumniarum, mendaciorum, et imposturarum laico-Cardinalis Bellarmini (London, 1610).

65 A modest enquiry, whether St. Peter were ever at Rome, and bishop of that church?: wherein, I. the arguments of Cardinall Bellarmine and others, for the affirmative are considered, II. some considerations taken notice of that render the negative highly probable (London: Randall Taylor, 1687).

66 A defence of the confuter of Bellarmin's Second note of the church, antiquity, against the cavils of the adviser (London: Richard Chiswell, 1687).

Blackwell, Francis Dillingham, William Guild, John Buckeridge, Edward Dalton, John Yates, and William Sherlock. A quick survey of the titles and publications reflects both the range of topics (e.g., doctrinal, ecclesiastical, historical and political) and intended audiences (e.g., academic, laity, convinced Protestants, those considering Roman Catholicism, several different generations, several different national settings, etc.) for these refutations. Yet all of them directly point to Bellarmine as the definitive expression of such alleged heresies and lies which must be answered by the biblical reasoning offered by these Protestant apologists.

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69 Disputatio brevis et succincta de duabus questionibus: viz: de limbo patrum, et de comparatione Petri cum Paulo adversus Robertum Bellarminum (Cambridge: John Legat, 1602); idem, Disputatio de natura poenitentiae aduersus Bellarminum (Cambridge: John Legat, 1606); idem, Spicilegium de Antichristo: in quo Protestantium argumenta contra Bellarmini sophismata asseruntur (Cambridge: John Legat, 1605); idem, Tractatus brevis, in quo ex præcipuorum papistarum. inprimis ipsius Bellarmini confessione, multa Protestantium dogmata, tutissima esse concluduntur (Cambridge: John Legat, 1603).

70 Ignis fatuus. Or, The elf-fire of purgatorie. : Wherein Bellarmine is confuted by arguments both out of the Old and New Testament, and by his owne proofes out of Scriptures and Fathers. Also an annexe to this treatise of purgatorie, concerning the distinction of sinne in mortall and veniall (London: Augustine Matthewes, 1625).

71 De potestate Papae in rebus temporalibus, siue in regibus deponendis usurpata; adversus Robertum Cardinalem Bellarminum, libri duo (London: John Bill, 1614).

72 Doubtings dovnfall: first, prouing the communitie of the Saints assurance. Secondly, disprouing Bellarmines and his fellowes false allegations and friuolous exceptions against that truth (London: B. Alsop, 1624).

73 Gods arraignement of hypocrites: with an inlargement concerning Gods decree in ordering sinne: as likewise a defence of Mr. Calvines against Bellarmine, and of Mr. Perkins against Arminius (Cambridge: Cantrell Legge, 1615).

74 A brief discourse concerning the notes of the church: with some reflections on Cardinal Bellarmin's Notes (London: Richard Chiswell, 1687).
At the same time certain well-known Protestant theologians and churchmen on both sides of the English Channel also wrote against Bellarmine even if they are associated with other less polemical publications or accomplishments by historians today. In England this includes William Perkins, the Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Abbot, George Downname, Andrew Willet, and Samuel Rutherford. Among the Continental theologians, such heavyweights as Johannes Piscator, Samuel Huber,

75 A Reformed Catholic (Cambridge, 1597) is a good example, but many others could be listed.


77 A Treatise Concerning Antichrist (London: Cuthbert Burbie, 1603).


81 Antibellarminus: Hoc est confutatio eorum, que aduersus Christianam fidem, pro tuenda Pontificia sua religione, tomis disputauit quatuor Robertus Bellarminus, 6 vols. (Goslar: Johann Vogt, 1607-1609).
Lambert Daneau\textsuperscript{82}, Johannes Polyander\textsuperscript{83}, Lucas Trelcatius\textsuperscript{84}, Conrad Vorstius\textsuperscript{85}, Philippe DuPlessis-Mornay\textsuperscript{86}, Pierre DuMoulin\textsuperscript{87}, Jean Daillé [Johannes Dallaeus]\textsuperscript{88}, Samuel

\textsuperscript{82} Ad Roberti Bellarmini disputationes theologicas de rebus in religione controversiae Responsio (Geneva, 1596). Also see his work on sacramental polemics: Ad Tomum secundum Controversiarum Roberti Bellarmini Responsio Lamberti Danaei... (1598).

\textsuperscript{83} Disputationes Antibellarminas (1623). See also his The refutation of an epistle, written by a certain doctor of the Augustins order within the citie of Leige: together with the arguments, which he hath borrowed from Robert Bellarmine, to proove the Invocation of Saints, trans. Henry Hexham (London, F. Kingston, 1610).

\textsuperscript{84} See both early editions: Locorum communium s. theologiae institutio per epito men. : In qua cuitus[ue] loci veritas asseritur, & Bellarmini sophismata refutantur (London: Officina Nortoniana, 1608) and Scholatica et Methodica locorum communium S. theologiae institution...accessit huic Index errorum ecclesiae Romanae, una cum antidote ex IV tomis disputationum Roberto Bellarmini, Conrado Vorstio... (Hanoviae: Guilielmum Antonium, 1610). The English version is A briefe institution of the common places of sacred divinitie: Wherein, the truth of every place is proved, and the sophisms of Bellarmine are reproved, trans. John Gawen (London: T. Purfoot, 1610).

\textsuperscript{85} Enchiridion controversiarum inter evangelicos & Pontificios...ex IV Tomis Disputationum Rob. Bellarmini... (Hanoviae: Guilielmum Antonium, 1610). Vorstius, of course, found himself on the receiving end of a great deal of Reformed polemics (including works directed against him by Lubbertus), but on the Bellarmine issue he was decidedly Protestant.

\textsuperscript{86} Mysterium iniquitatis seu, Historia papatus: Quibus gradibus ad id fastigii enisus sit, quamque acriter omni tempore ubique à piis contra intercessum. Asseruntur etiam jura imperatorum, regum, & principum Christianorum adversus Bellarminum & Baronium Cardinales (Saumur: Thomas Portau, 1611).

\textsuperscript{87} The accomplishment of the prophecies; or The third booke in defence of the Catholike faith: contained in the booke of the high & mighty King Iames. I. by the grace of God King of Great Britaine and Ireland. Against the allegations of R. Bellarmine; and F.N. Coeffeteau & other doctors of the Romish church, trans. John Heath (Oxford: Joseph Barnes, 1613).

\textsuperscript{88} Apologie pour des Eglises Réformees (Charenton, 1641).
Maresius\textsuperscript{89}, William Ames\textsuperscript{90}, and Gisbertus Voetius\textsuperscript{91} all published separate treatises—some rather lengthy!—with their sites set upon Bellarmin and his Controversies. Other major Reformed theologians of the post-Reformation era incorporated anti-Bellarmin materials into larger theological works or dogmatic systems, such as those by Franciscus Gomarus\textsuperscript{92}, Johannes Cocceius\textsuperscript{93}, John Owen\textsuperscript{94}, Johann Heinrich Hottinger\textsuperscript{95}, or Petrus van Mastricht.\textsuperscript{96} An illustrious group of figures during High Orthodoxy (c. 1640-1700)

\textsuperscript{89} Maresius’ magnum opus is his Systema Theologiae (Groningen, 1673), and his polemics are found there as well as in many of his other published works.

\textsuperscript{90} Bellarminus Enervatus, 4 vols. (Amsterdam: Ioannem Ianssonium, 1630). Though British, Ames published this during his years at Franeker in the Netherlands, placing him in the Continental context during this stage of his career as a theologian and churchman. Van Asselt calls Ames’ polemical work the best known of the Protestant responses to Bellarmin. Van Asselt, Inleiding, 97.

\textsuperscript{91} Cf. his Selectarum disputationum theologicarum, 5 vols. (Utrecht: Joannem a Waesberge, 1648-1669).

\textsuperscript{92} Gomarus’ Disputationes theologicae is found in the second volume of his Opera theologica, 3 vols. (Amsterdam, 1644).

\textsuperscript{93} Cf. Cocceius’ Summa theologicae ex Scriptura repetita (Geneva, 1665).

\textsuperscript{94} Owen often incorporated polemics in his writing, and Bellarmin is clearly a target in several places. See Milton, 400. Milton also lists Alexander Cooke, William Perkins, Thomas Morton, Gabriel Powel, and Andrew Willet as other well-known “anti-papal” polemicists in the English context.

\textsuperscript{95} Cf. Cursus theologicus; Methodo Altingiana: Qua, non modo Definitiones ejus proponuntur, & ordinaries Scripturae locis confirmantur, sed etiam perpetuis Canonibus ita illustrantur; With: Urum, id est, Oratio Ideam nobis exhibens, Theologi Theoretici Occasione Solemnis promotionis in Antiquissima Archipalatina Recitata a Joh. Heinrico Hottinger. (Heidelbergeae: Adriani Wyngaerden, 1660).

\textsuperscript{96} No finer example of the close relationship between dogmatics and polemics in the post-Reformation period could be given than Mastricht’s Theoretico-practica theologia, qua, per capita theologica, pars dogmatica, elenchtica et practica, perpetua successione conjugantur, praecedunt in usum operis, paraleipomena, seu skeleton de optima concionandi methodo. 2 vols. (Amsterdam: Henricus & Theodorus Boom, 1682-87), which included exegetical, dogmatic, polemical and practical treatments of every doctrinal topic, including those at the heart of the conflict with Rome—prolegomena, ecclesiology, soteriology and sacramentology. On Mastricht’s methodology, see Richard A. Muller, “The Problem of Protestant Scholasticism—A Review and
even went so far as to compile their polemics with Bellarmine and the Counter-Reformation apologists into whole polemical systems, such as those by Johannes Hoornbeek\textsuperscript{97} and Francis Turretin.\textsuperscript{98} For their part, Hoornbeeck and Turretin included both refutations directed at Bellarmine in particular and others towards post-Tridentine Catholicism in general in larger comprehensive works which defended Protestant and/or Reformed Orthodoxy against the historical and contemporary post-Reformation aberrations of Catholic, heretical, sectarian and heterodox theology. Besides Romanism, the heresy of Socinianism figured largely in to these works.\textsuperscript{99}

Just as they paralleled the Reformed in other respects during the seventeenth century, Lutheran theologians also put considerable effort into the refutation of error through polemical writings during the post-Reformation period. R. D. Preus’ \textit{The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism} notes that polemics and disputation were an altogether natural aspect to the development of the tradition: “A characteristic of Lutheran orthodoxy, and in harmony with its deep concern for purity of doctrine and hatred of all heresy, was a polemical tone than pervaded much of the systematic and exegetical theology of the day.”\textsuperscript{100} So characteristic does Preus find it, in fact, that he

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{97} \textit{Summa controversiarum religionis, cum infidelibus, haereticis, schismaticis} (Utrecht, 1653).
\item \textsuperscript{98} \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticae}. 3 vols. (Geneva, 1679-85). Incidentally, his \textit{Opera} also includes his \textit{Disputatio theologica de Scripturae Sacrae auctoritate, adversus pontificos}, which is relevant to this topic of polemical responses to Bellarmine.
\item \textsuperscript{99} Van Asselt, \textit{Inleiding}, 117-118,
\item \textsuperscript{100} \textit{The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism}, 2 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1970-72), 33.
\end{itemize}
does not even address polemics as a distinct theological genre of the period for Lutherans but rather presupposes this “tone” throughout his analysis of several loci and a score of post-Reformation thinkers in his two-volume work. He also notes that Lutheran polemics was both valuable for defining orthodoxy over and against non-Lutheran heterodoxy as it was important for settling internal doctrinal debates between the various Lutheran theologians who were themselves at odds.101

Consequently, there was also an outpouring of Lutheran polemics against Bellarmine’s Controversies and other Counter-Reformation Catholic polemicists during the same time as the Reformed were publishing such works. Comparable anti-Bellarmine Lutheran writings include those by Rodolphus Hospinianus102, Matthäus Dresser103, Aegidius Hunnius104, Jakob Reineccius105, Salomon Gesner106, Balthasar Meisner107, and

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101 Preus, 409.

102 De templis: hoc est, de origine, progressu, vs et abvsv templorvm, ac omnino rerum omnium ad templa pertinentium libri V. ... cum integris capitibus, tum responsionibus ad Rob. Bellarmini, Caes. Baronii Cardinalium, & sociorum eorum, sophismata & argumenta, quibus idololatriam Romanam defendere conantur (Tiguri: Froschoviana, 1587).

103 Confutatio commenticiae opinionis Roberti Bellarmini e Societate Iesu (Frankfurt: J. Wechel, 1592).

104 De indulgentiis et iubilaeo Romani Pontificis tractatus: Scriptus et oppositus duobus libris Roberti Bellarmini Iesuitae, in quibus obsoletas & iam rancidas merces Papæ, Romanas indulgentias orbi Christiano commendare non erubuit (Frankfurt: Johann Spiess, 1601).

105 Panoplia id est armatura theologica, duobus libris, quorum prior originem, posterior ordinem Dei cognitionis clarè aperit, methodicè comprehensa ... : ut veritas solide astruatur, & falsitas e contrario valide destruatur; & omnia, in primis Roberto Bellarmini ... quae in tres tomos concessit & digesit, nervose cum examinentur, tum refutentur, 4 vol. (Wittenberg: Martin Henckel, 1609).

106 De conciliis libri duo posteriores elencticì: In quibus totidem libri Roberti Bellarmini Iesuitæ solidé refutantur (Wittenberg: Clement Berger, 1610).

107 Pub. Praelectiones in locum de ecclesia: In quibus controversiae circa hanc materiam inter nos et pontificios cum primis agitatae, perspicue tractantur, veritas[ue] orthodoxa contra Rob.
the great Lutheran scholastic Johann Gerhard.\textsuperscript{108} The last of these thinkers (Gerhard) may have been as important for the development of post-Reformation Lutheran dogmatics as the Jesuit Robert Bellarmine was for the vindication of Roman Catholicism following the Council of Trent, but he was not the only great Lutheran theologian to engage in extensive polemical writings as he addressed exegetical and dogmatic matters.\textsuperscript{109} Such eminent Lutheran theologians as Johann Conrad Dannhauer, Abraham Calovius, and Johannes Andreas Quenstedt also distinguished themselves for their powerful use of various kinds of polemics for the good of the church and the vindication of Lutheran Orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{110}

In the transition from Early Orthodoxy (c. 1565-1640) to High Orthodoxy (c. 1640-1700), the character of theological polemics against Bellarmine and the Roman Catholics evolved, both in the case of the Reformed and among the Lutherans. In the later decades of the seventeenth century, for example, there was generally speaking a gradual shift among the anti-Bellarmine polemicists away from fundamental disagreements over prolegomena and ecclesiology and towards topics of anthropology, soteriology and the appropriation of church history and ancillary historical and linguistic disciplines. Such \textit{topoi} slowly eclipsed the older anti-Bellarmine themes perhaps in part

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\item Bellarmini, Gregorii de Valentia, Stapletoni, Huntlaei, Becani, Tanneri aliorum[ue] Romanensium errores ac [phluarias] defenditur (Wittenberg: Johann Helwig, 1630).
\item Disputationum theologicarum: in quibus Catholicae & Evangelicae doctrinae veritas in præcipuis quibusdam articulis cum Romano Catholicis Ecclesiae nostre controversis ex ipsomet Bellarmino confirmatur, decades tres (Jena: Ernest Steinmann, 1633).
\item Preus, 35, 58.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
because such things were already the subjects of lively debate in Protestant circles, and this naturally changed the contours of polemics as well.\footnote{Cf. van Asselt, \textit{Inleiding}, 116.} While Preus has the Lutheran context of High Orthodoxy in mind, his assessment could easily be modified to reflect the character of Reformed polemicists in the latter half of the seventeenth century:

\dots polemics becomes more ordered, controlled, and even stereotyped. There is less of the broadside and sarcastic blast that was typical of Luther. A carefully worked out polemical theology develops—a calm, careful analysis of every influence that threatens Lutheran doctrine on each \textit{locus}, and an elaborate, Biblically based defense of the Lutheran position. Dogmatics becomes \textit{theologia didactico-polemica}, the didactic side consisting of a systematic, thetical arrangement of the Biblical material pertaining to each \textit{locus}, and the polemic side dealing with the problems of terminology, Biblical interpretation, and historical development as these factors impinge on each dogmatic \textit{locus}.\footnote{Preus, 34-35.}

As Preus mentions, the maturing of Protestant-Romanist polemics included greater attention to the historical support for Reformation and post-Reformation doctrines. Among the major Reformed polemicists, therefore, separate extended treatises or treatments on the interpretation of the church fathers were penned by several different prominent theologians including Jean Daillé [Johannes Dallaeus], Andre Rivetus, Gisbertus Voetius and Francis Turretin.\footnote{Van Asselt, \textit{Inleiding}, 116-117. Although the church fathers did have a rhetorical and polemical use in conflicts with Bellarmine and other heterodox theologians, Irena Backus asserts that this does not imply that there was no interest in good historiography among the post-Reformaton theologians and polemicists who fought between confessional boundaries as they appealed to the fathers. Instead, it was the burden of her 2003 monograph to show how high standards of objective historiography were established and maintained despite the raging controversies over many theological issues between those of different theological confessions. “In the following pages,” Backus writes, “I shall argue that the 16\textsuperscript{th} and early 17\textsuperscript{th} centuries were characterized by an interest in history first and foremost and that the very omnipresence of history made it the obvious means whereby theologians of all religious parties could affirm their confessional identity. This hypothesis does not deny that there was a religious controversy in the 16\textsuperscript{th} and early 17\textsuperscript{th} century. It does, however, aim to do away with the notion that theologians of}
Bellarmine’s *Controversies*, examples can be given to show how particular historical sources—such as Augustine for example—were used by post-Reformation figures to undercut the credibility of the great Jesuit polemicist while seeking to claim them for confessionally Protestant conceptions of doctrine or ethics. While most of this style of argumentation took place in the later stages of the anti-Bellarmine effort, there was certainly a deliberate use of the fathers in every stage of post-Reformation polemic—in Early Orthodoxy as well as during High Orthodoxy and beyond.

A number of indications suggest that this vast outpouring of rebuttals to Bellarmine’s *Controversies* was not missed by Roman Catholics. They, of course, responded to polemics with further polemics (just as, for example, Lubbertus had a couple of exchanges with Jacob Gretzerius, who functioned as a surrogate for

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114 Cf. Anton Reiser’s *S. Augustinus episcopus in Africa Hipponensis, veritatis evangelico-catholicæ in potioribus fidei controversiis testis et confessor, contra Bellarminum et alios scriptores papeos, antiques parter & recentiores; : insertis etiam suo loco questionibus Jansenio-Norisianis; vindicates* (Frankfurt, Johann David Zunner, 1678).

115 Cf. John Rainolds’ *A defence of the iudgment of the Reformed churches. That a man may lawfullie not onelie put awaie his wife for her adulterie, but also marrie another. Wherein both Robert Bellarmin the Iesuits Latin treatise, and an English pamphlet of a namelesse author mainteyning the contrarie are confuted by Ionn Raynolds. A taste of Bellarmins dealing in controversies of religion: how he depraveth scripturs, misalleageth fathers, and abuseth reaso[n]s to the perverting of the truth of God, and poysoning of his churche with errour* (Dordrecht: George Walters, 1610). The title’s particular mention of how Bellarmine not only “depraveth” scripture but “misalleageth” church fathers highlights this dynamic in anti-Bellarmine polemicizing by the Protestants.

116 While it is not the burden of this dissertation to describe the social history which was the outworking of interconfessional polemics, the reader can consult other works for an able presentation of these local dynamics of anti-Catholicism in various communities within the Netherlands. See Christine Kooi, “Converts and Apostates: the Competition for Souls in Early Modern Holland,” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 92 (2001): 199-200; C. Augustijn, C. and E. Honee, eds., *Vervreemding en verzoening: de Relatie tussen katholieken en Protestanten in Nederland, 1550-2000* (Nijmegen, 1998).
Bellarmine\textsuperscript{117}, but they went beyond straightforward answers to the writings of Protestant polemicists. Not to be outdone by the volume of works which challenged Bellarmine, the Counter-Reformation polemicists at times suggested that this deluge of publications itself demonstrated the superiority of Bellarmine’s writings, for the large number of Protestant responses, they said, only implied a collective failure by all of them to adequately disprove Bellarmine himself.\textsuperscript{118}

However, others did not welcome this development in quite the same way. Bellarmine’s biographer James Brodrick recounts the story of a Hungarian Jesuit named Stephen Arator who wrote to a fellow Jesuit in 1591 that Bellarmine’s \textit{Controversies} had done the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation “more harm than good” by supplying the Lutherans and Calvinists with an intolerable amount of fresh fodder for their Protestant polemics.\textsuperscript{119} Clearly the interconfessional polemics of the post-Reformation period such as the responses to Robert Bellarmine’s \textit{Controversies} were so pervasive and influential that they brought about many different sorts of reactions by many different people on all sides of the conflict.

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\textsuperscript{117} Cf. Tutino, \textit{Empire of Souls}, 122.
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\textsuperscript{119} Brodrick, 76-77.
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Sibrandus Lubbertus as Part of the Reaction to Bellarmine

While it is not necessary to review all of the biographical details concerning how Lubbertus participated in the polemical battle against Robert Bellarmine after the publication of the *Controversies*, our presentation of the larger Protestant landscape of anti-Bellarmine polemics ought to draw our attention to certain aspects of Lubbertus’ writings and how they fit into that big picture. Lubbertus did not write against Roman Catholicism in general, but against Bellarmine, whose initial volume of the *Controversies* first appeared just two short years after he began serving as a theological professor of Reformed dogmatics at Franeker. Therefore, just as William Whitaker composed his refutation of Bellarmine in the course of his preparation to lecture to students at Cambridge, so also did Lubbertus set out to handle Bellarmine initially for the sake of his students at Franeker and then later for the sake of the broader church through publication of those lectures.

Moreover, he used the tools of scholasticism in order to refute Bellarmine’s assertions in the *Controversies* point by point if not line by line and phrase by phrase. This scholastic method of theological polemics is evident in several different ways. First, it is evident in the tools themselves—a methodology of disputation which follows orderly presentation through distinctions and logical arguments, appealing to doctrine, exegesis and history all as authoritative sources in the critique of Bellarmine. Secondly,

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120 Some of this is detailed in chapter one above or in van der Woude’s *Sibrandus Lubbertus*.

121 For Lubbertus’ biography, see the discussion above in the introductory chapter of this dissertation.

122 Lubbertus’ frequent use of syllogisms is very distasteful to van der Woude, but it is this use of syllogisms and other logical forms which places him within the academic standards of his day—
Lubbertus’ sources are consistent with his scholastic form of polemics. For obvious reasons Scripture is his preferred authority to use in refuting Bellarmine, but he regularly appeals to established doctrinal formulas (creeds, etc.) and respected theologians from church history in order to persuade his reader of Bellarmine’s many errors. The church father Augustine was a favorite source to use against the Jesuit apologist\textsuperscript{123}, but others as recent as Martin Chemnitz (whose criticism of the Council of Trent was known to Bellarmine) are held in great respect and called upon to disprove the particular arguments of the \textit{Controversies} (yet even Chemnitz is not beyond modest improvement, Lubbertus shows us).\textsuperscript{124} The indications from Lubbertus’ correspondence shows that he also refined his arguments against Bellarmine through epistolary contact with other British and Continental Reformed theologians, and he sought out the best anti-Bellarmine polemical works of his day to aid him in his own writings.\textsuperscript{125} The same letters, incidentally, also record the encouragements of his colleagues who felt that Lubbertus was uniquely able to offer the definitive refutation of Bellarmine which all Protestants purportedly longed to

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\textsuperscript{123} See, for example, Lubbertus’ \textit{De conciliis libri quinque: scholastice & theologice collati cum disputationibus Roberti Bellarmini} (Genevae: Samuelem Crispinum, 1601), 225 (Book 5, chapter 9), where the last page of the treatise features a sizable quotation from Augustine to finish on a high rhetorical note.

\textsuperscript{124} \textit{De principiis christianorum dogmatum libri septem, scholastice & theologice collati cum disputationibus Roberti Bellarmini}... (Franekerae: Aegidium Radaeum, 1591), 223ff. (Book 2, chapter 12).

\textsuperscript{125} Van der Woude, 111-130. Cf. Milton, 399.
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see. Lubbertus was therefore a part of a large community of theologians all working together on the problem of Bellarmine and his Controversies.

One of the more provocative records of Lubbertus’ intellectual development and his theological method in composing anti-Bellarmine polemics is found in the record of his personal library, which was published for sake of a public auction shortly after his death in 1625. This index suggests a broad range of theological sources available for his use—patristic, medieval, Reformation era, and contemporary, and this is supplemented by classical literature, contemporary Roman Catholic works, and

126 Here van der Woude’s study is superbly able to locate Lubbertus in his Early Orthodox context of polemicism, describing a letter from Francis Gomarus to continue the work, several letters from David Pareus concerning the threat of Roman Catholicism, a note from Francis Junius’ son Johannes Cassius Junius who pleaded with Lubbertus to finish what his father had begun, a petition from a Reformed pastor in Frankfurt to finally finish a complete refutation of Bellarmine by using a sympathetic publisher in his city, a letter from Balthazar Lydus which urges Lubbertus to attack Bellarmine on his views of free will and grace, and another letter from the younger Junius who felt that Lubbertus ought to focus on Bellarmine rather than continue the dispute with Jacob Gretzerius. Van der Woude, 95, 95-97, 97-98, 100-101, 104, and 119.

127 Catalogus librorum qui ex bibliotheca reverendi & celeberrimi viri D. Sibrandi Lubberti p.m. SS. Th. dum vivere, doctoris & professoris primarii in Acad. Franekerana, publica auctione Franekeræa distrahentur 29 die Augusti 1625 (Franekeræa: Fredericus Heynus, 1625). This may not necessarily be a comprehensive catalogue given that these would have been the books available for sale rather than a catalogue assembled by Lubbertus for his own use, however it is a minimum of what he owned and read.

128 E.g., Opera Omnia for Athanasius and Augustine and dozens of others.

129 E.g., Bernard, Lombard’s Sentences, and Nicolas of Lyra.

130 E.g., Erasmas, Calvin, Musculus, Flacius-Illyricus and Ursinus.

131 E.g., Chemnitz’s Loci Communnes and his Examinis of the Council of Trent, Junius’ refutation of Bellarmine’s seventh controversy, Polanus’ Syntagma, Whitaker’s Disputatio de sacra Scriptura (1588) and his Opera Omnia (2nd vol.; Geneva, 1600), and Hommius’ 1614 Collegio Anti-Bellarminiano.

132 E.g., Homer and Josephus.

133 E.g., Bellarmine and Toledo.
philosophy. He clearly poured over Bellarmine’s *Controversies*, acquiring both the 1587 and the 1601 publications (both from Ingolstadt) in addition to what listed as an *Opera Omnia* for Bellarmine from 1589 and another two volumes of Bellarmine’s *General Controversies*. The catalogue also lists the polemics of other Reformed theologians who took aim at Bellarmine, including William Whitaker’s *Disputatio* (1588), Francis Junius’ *Animadversiones* (1600), Lancelot Andrewes’ *Responsio ad Apologiam cardinalis Bellarmini*, and Hommius’ *Collegium Anti-Bellarminiano* (1614) as well as other Reformed controversialists. Lubbertus' personal library confirms methodological rigor with which he wrote his polemics against Bellarmine as an expression of his scholastic style.

Yet the most direct support for Lubbertus’ placement in the wider Protestant reaction to Bellarmine is how he was received by both insiders and outsiders. Internally, among Reformed theologians and Reformed churches, he was greatly respected as one of the great refuters of Bellarmine in his day135, and van der Woude suggests this high regard may have even held out promise for defeating the rising Arminian threat in Holland by providing a consolidating platform for the Reformed Orthodox upon which to rally as they prepared to drive out Arminius and his followers.136 Outside of his Protestant and Reformed ranks, he was also considered such a threat to Roman Catholic

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134 E.g., Suarez.

135 In 1608, William Whitaker himself was quoting Lubbertus along with Sutcliffe, Daneau, Junius and Chamier in his *Praelectiones doctissimi viri Guilielmi Whitakeri...contra pontificios, inprimis Robertum Bellarminum Jesuitam, in septem quaestiones distribute...* (Herborn, 1603).

136 Van der Woude, 129-130, and 104.
teaching that his entire corpus of writings was placed upon the Vatican’s list of forbidden books on November 16, 1693.\footnote{Van der Woude, 574-75, which appeals to Joseph Hilgers’ Der Index der Verbotenen Bücher (Freiburg, 1904).}

**Other Roman Catholic Apologists and the Protestant Response**

The scope of post-Reformation polemics between Roman Catholic and Protestant apologists is much greater than merely Bellarmine and those scores of theologians who responded to him. There were significant Counter-Reformation publications before the Controversies appeared, and others were written throughout the time of Early and High Orthodoxy. By J. P. Donnelly’s estimation, the four most important Jesuit controversialists of the sixteenth century were Peter Canisius (1521-1597), Antonio Possevino (1533-1611), Edmund Campion (1540-1581) and Robert Bellarmine.\footnote{“Jesuit Controversialists and the Defense of Tridentine Tradition,” in The Quadrilog: Tradition and the Future of Ecumenism, ed. Kenneth Hagen, (Collegeville, MN.: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 94-109.} Although the last of these figures towers over the others in reputation, Campion’s 1581 tract *Decem rationes*\footnote{Henley-on-Thames, England: S. Brinkley, 1581.} was republished over fifty times, and some twenty separate rebuttals appeared in England by various Protestants.\footnote{Donnelly, “Jesuit Controversialists,” 98.} On the continent, Possevino participated in a very heated polemical exchange with the Lutheran David Chytraeus in the 1580’s.\footnote{Donnelly, “Jesuit Controversialists,” 100.} Another Jesuit in Antwerp named Francis Costero wrote *Enchiridio Controversiarum*, to which Francis Gomarus of Leiden University’s theological faculty
responded with his refutation *Speculum verae ecclesiae Christi: quo pontificiorum errores a Francisco Costero...confutantur*, a polemical work primarily on the doctrine of the church.\(^{142}\) The Englishman Thomas Stapleton (1535-1598) undoubtedly also belongs on the short list of major Roman Catholic apologists and polemicists from the post-Reformation period.\(^{143}\)

Polemics also remained provincial or even local in character as communities or regions or linguistic groups had their own representatives of both the Catholic side and the Protestant side to enter into the fray with an exchange of books or pamphlets every bit as heated as the major publications like Bellarmine which transcended such provincialism. The work of L. J. Rogier well-illustrates this phenomenon in the northern reaches of the Netherlands where he suggests that Martinus Becanus and Leonard Lessing were popular controversialist writers for the Roman cause along with Bellarmine. He also lists regionally significant polemicists in seventeenth century Friesland like Veron, Hosius, Cochlaeus, Baius, Molanus, Baronius, Becanus, Lessius, Cudsemini, Jansen, A. van Walenburch, P. van Walenburch, Bousuet, Duncanus, David, de Gouda, Sailly, Beyerlinck, Wandelman, Vekiti, Landshere, Molina, Myleman, Hazart, Dael and van Wijck.\(^{144}\) The variety of Romanist controversial writings during this time is all the more remarkable for the fact that Friesland was officially a Reformed territory during the whole seventeenth century.

\(^{142}\) Hanoviae: Guilielmum Antonium, 1603.


Robert Bellarmine’s *Controversies*, which appeared in three volumes between 1586 and 1593, was a literary, theological, and ecclesiastical milestone for every region touched by the Reformation in the sixteenth century. It was such a comprehensive affirmation of the declarations of the Council of Trent and such an exhaustive attack upon the defining doctrines of the Protestants that it left a generation of Reformed and Lutheran theologians fearful of all that could be lost through the persuasive argumentation of one extremely erudite—and thus an extremely *dangerous*—Jesuit. Although there were Catholic-Protestant polemics before Bellarmine’s work appeared, the *Controversies* sent such polemics into an entirely new stage as Lubbertus and dozens of other theologians rushed to offer a published rebuttal to this watershed book, whether short or long, whether broad in scope or very narrow in scope. Consequently, it would not be improper to speak of a new genre of Protestant writings which began to appear in the polemical responses to Bellarmine, and this in turn led to greater refinement in scholastic theology and heightened concern with the advance of heresies among those on both sides of the ecclesiastical divide. Therefore, Bellarmine is not only the essential backdrop for many of Sibrandus Lubbertus’ most important theological writings; he was the archetypal polemical opponent for Lubbertus and a century of Reformed and Lutheran scholastics during Early and High Orthodoxy who applied their considerable energy towards the defense of evangelical faith and the Protestant churches who could never be reconciled to the heresies they perceived in the Romanism of the Council of Trent and Bellarmine’s *Controversies*. 
From here, we are ready to begin an analysis of some of Lubbertus’ polemical writings on prolegomena, ecclesiology, and the matter of church councils in the period following the break with Rome—all of these shaped by Lubbertus' concern with how Robert Bellarmine had made vast departures from the biblical and historic system of Christian doctrine on the role of authority in the church.
Prolegomena as Distinct Part of Lubbertus’ Works

In order to analyze and assess the polemical theological writings of Sibrandus Lubbertus, the starting point is undoubtedly his prolegomena. This is not to suggest that Lubbertus was so systematic in his dogmatic writings that he had to address prolegomena as the first of the traditional theological loci before going on to write about the others. Rather, it was the requirement of the time in which he lived which made it necessary to address prolegomena first.

As we have noted above, Lubbertus had just recently begun his lectures as a founding faculty member of the theological academy in Franeker in 1585 when Robert Bellarmine published the first volume of his Controversies in 1586. Having come to Friesland in order to supply properly trained Reformed ministers for all the pulpits in the northern regions of the Netherlands which were formerly inhabited by Roman Catholic priests, the young theology professor had already been aware of the need to purge Romanist theology from Friesland through his lectures to the Franeker students. The appearance of the Controversies merely added to the urgency of the task and offered a concise articulation of the Romanists’ theology to which he could respond. As Bellarmine addressed prolegomena first before moving to other matters, this is also the foundational topic where Lubbertus would begin his refutation of the Romanists through

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1 Robert Bellarmine, Disputationes de controversiis christianaæ fidei adversus huius temporis haereticos, 3 vols. (Ingolstadt, 1586-1593).
his lectures which eventually took the published form of his *De Principiis*.² In terms of Lubbertus’ whole *corpus* of writings, this was also his first major publication, which makes it all the more obvious to consider as the first distinct theme of his polemical writings against Robert Bellarmine.

An examination of *De Principiis* shows that Lubbertus was an important post-Reformation Reformed theologian on the topic of prolegomena—not particularly aspiring to overturn earlier Protestant/Reformed assertions on the subject of theology and its sources, but nevertheless offering nuance to the clear Protestant position and giving a timely presentation of the traditional aspects of prolegomena in response to Bellarmine’s recent treatise.

**Early Protestant and Reformed Writings on Prolegomena, circa 1520-1600**

In the sixteenth century theological writings of the Reformation and early post-Reformation period, there was an inordinate interest in the topics of Scripture and hermeneutics among Protestant theologians—before, during and following the time when Sibrandus Lubbertus composed *De Principiis*. This great interest spawned both a large volume of writings and a rather dynamic character to the treatments of prolegomena in

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² *De principiis christianorum dogmatum libri septime, scholastice & theologice collati cum disputationibus Roberti Bellarmini...* (Franekeræ: Aegidium Radaeum, 1591). Indeed, as van der Woude points out, Bellarmine provided not only the occasion but also the priority for Lubbertus’ treatment of prolegomena. It seems rather clear that Lubbertus structured *De Principiis* around seven books which roughly correspond to the structure of Bellarmine’s prolegomena section in his *Controversies*. See C. van der Woude, *Sibrandus Lubbertus, leven en werken: in het bijzonder naar zijn correspondentie* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1963), 74-75. The historian E. L. Vriemoet wrote in 1758 that *De Principiis* had been through nine printed editions. See Vriemoet, *Athenarum Frisiarum*, 2 vols. (Leovardiae: Gulielmus Coulon, 1758), 1:15. It was orginally dedicated to Johann Jakob Grynaeus, the Swiss Reformed theologian, whose writings had been so influential upon Lubbertus. Van der Woude mentions the correspondance between Lubbertus and Grynaeus which took place in late 1591. Van der Woude, *Sibrandus Lubbertus*, 72.
this era.\(^3\) The earliest Protestant writings—especially among the first- and second-
generation Reformers like Luther, Melanchthon and Calvin—tended to reflect an
emphatic and polemical rejection of the faulty assumptions of Roman Catholicism as they
described the character and use of that divine revelation found in Holy Scripture. This
eyearly period, of course, was the time when Protestants embraced the authority of
Scripture over tradition, a more narrowly defined canon of Scripture which excluded the
Roman Catholic apocrypha, and the interpretive superiority of the analogy of Scripture
over the infallible proclamations of a pope. In the second half of the sixteenth century,
Protestant prolegomena began to reflect the greater sophistication of scholastic
methodology, which offered doctrinal expansion through nuance and technical
terminology\(^4\), more technical approaches to philology and exegesis\(^5\), and a maturation of
polemics and confessional rivalries as doctrine was articulated in creeds and subjected to
one’s own exegesis and one’s own reading of the church fathers.

As for the secondary literature scholarship on Protestant prolegomena in general
during the early post-Reformation era, it has improved considerably through two
publications—R. D. Preus’ \textit{The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism} and Richard
A. Muller’s \textit{Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics}.\(^6\) Without any secondary literature

\(^3\) There are far too many primary sources to attempt to list in this place, but other studies have
presented useful overviews of the period. Cf. Richard A. Muller, \textit{Post-Reformation Reformed
Dogmatics}, vol. 1, \textit{Prolegomena to Theology}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. and vol. 2, \textit{Holy Scripture}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Grand

\(^4\) See, for example, Zanchi, Ursinus, Perkins or Polanus.

\(^5\) See, for example, Beza, Junius, and Buxtorf.

\(^6\) R. D. Preus, \textit{The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism}, 2 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia
Publishing House, 1970-72) and Muller, \textit{PRRD}, vol. 1 and 2. See also Preus’ earlier work, \textit{The
Inspiration of Scripture: A Study of the Seventeenth Century Lutheran Dogmaticians} (London:
Oliver and Boyd, 1955).
concerning Lubbertus’ prolegomena, these survey works describe much of Lubbertus’ prior commitments insofar as he shared many convictions with his sixteenth century Protestant contemporaries, and they offer a starting point for evaluating Lubbertus against the backdrop of other significant Protestant theologians. Other published monographs and articles have examined more narrow subjects within the topic of prolegomena which appear to be very informative for understanding the context of Lubbertus’ prolegomena even though they may not as much as mention the dogmatician and polemicist from Franeker by name. Some of these publications address general themes or narrow doctrinal issues of sixteenth century Protestant prolegomena; some explore the theology of particular figures who were either contemporaries with Lubbertus or had influenced him by their earlier writings on topics of prolegomena; and a few other publications address the general topic of biblical interpretation in the time of Early Orthodoxy, which is certainly relevant to assessing Lubbertus’ refutation of Bellarmine in *De Principiis*.

Because of their broad scope spanning the Reformation and post-Reformation period, both the works of R. D. Preus and those of Richard Muller are foundational secondary works for understanding Protestant theological writings on prolegomena. Preus details how prolegomena expanded gradually in the Lutheran tradition during the sixteenth century from the initial *loqui* treatment of Melanchthon and Hyperius to the expanded form of Wigland and Judex who developed scriptural (not philosophical) categories for prolegomena in their *Syntagma* to the fuller scholastic expression of Martin Chemnitz in his *Loci Communes*, which Preus calls “the most important contribution to dogmatic theology in the Lutheran Church in the 16th century.”

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worked to incorporate the history of doctrine into his presentation of prolegomena and then was inclined to follow the terminology of Scripture and the church fathers so as to avoid an unnecessarily philosophical articulation of Christian doctrine.\textsuperscript{8} Summarizing the contours of the post-Reformation Lutheran tradition on the topic of prolegomena, Preus offers the following list of Lutheran emphases: the nature and extent of Scripture’s authority, the external and internal criteria of Scripture, the inner witness of the Holy Spirit, Scripture as the source for doctrine, the canon, the authenticity of Greek and Hebrew texts, and the authenticity of the Hebrew vowel points.\textsuperscript{9} While some of these topics were not debated during Lubbertus’ lifetime (e.g., the inspiration of Hebrew vowel points), many of these early Lutherans were still unquestionably significant for Lubbertus given his citation of these sources as well as his own years of study at the University of Wittenberg from 1574-1576.

Muller’s \textit{Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics} is the other secondary literature milestone in early Protestant prolegomena. This study gives context for Lubbertus’ \textit{De Principiis} and for his contemporaries on the whole range of doctrinal topics which are included in prolegomena.

Certain other selections of secondary literature on post-Reformation theology also offer insight into the historical backdrop for Lubbertus’ writings on prolegomena. For example, Heiko Oberman’s landmark essay “\textit{Quo Vadis, Petre? Tradition from Irenaeus to Humani Generis}” is certainly not narrowly interested in Sibrandus Lubbertus or even the much larger subject of post-Reformation Protestants and their theology, and yet it

\textsuperscript{8} Preus, \textit{The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism}, 90-98.

\textsuperscript{9} Preus, \textit{The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism}, 296-309.
establishes some of the most important contours of Lubbertus’ prolegomena by tracing the relationship between Scripture and tradition in the western church up through the post-Reformation era into modern times.\(^{10}\) Oberman suggests that, of the two possible ways of understanding tradition in relation to scriptural revelation (his terms are “Tradition I” and “Tradition II”), Tradition I’s emphasis on tradition’s continuity with scripture through the history of biblical interpretation supporting the church’s proclamation was largely supplanted by Tradition II’s emphasis on two separate sources of revelation after the decrees of the Council of Trent and the defense of Trent offered by Robert Bellarmine.\(^{11}\)

Lubbertus is a clear confirmation the Oberman thesis of Tradition I and Tradition II because by the time of his theological education the Tradition I character of the very early Reformation was being replaced by the outlook of Tradition II as the Counter-Reformation’s doctrine developed into sharper relief with the Council of Trent and the writings of Bellarmine. In Lubbertus’ writings (as we’ll soon see), he clearly has the concept of Tradition II in mind as he presents his view of Scripture and the canon to be a complete rejection of a separate authority of church tradition in *De Principiis*.\(^{12}\) And yet, even with his Tradition II outlook, there is an apologetic value in his appeal to the church

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\(^{11}\) Oberman, “*Quo Vadis, Petre?*,” 280-289.

fathers for their continuity with the clear teaching of the Bible. Oberman’s close reading of the medieval background to debates over prolegomena in the Reformation and Counter-Reformation draw our attention to the subtleties at work in Lubbertus’ theology and his presentation of these views in the context of anti-Catholic polemics.

Another noteworthy contribution to the understanding of post-Reformation scholastic prolegomena is van Asselt’s work on the distinction between archetypal and ectypal theology among the Reformed orthodox of Lubbertus’ day, and, although this particular issue was not at stake in the refutations of Bellarmine, it describes the proliferation of scholastic distinctions taking place among the orthodox Reformed in Lubbertus’ day.

Another collection of secondary literature on post-Reformation prolegomena is concerned with various individual contemporaries of Lubbertus—such as Theodore Beza, Antoine De Chandieu, William Whitaker, and Franciscus Junius. Several insights into post-Reformation prolegomena among these works are relevant for evaluating Lubbertus. For example, Maruyama’s presentation of Beza on sola scriptura includes the qualification that the restriction of “scripture alone” only extends to doctrines essential to

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salvation and not to matters of “historical peculiarity” or the church’s government. In fact, Beza defends the practice of appealing to extra-biblical authorities (whether ancient or modern) because it can be consistent with the analogy of Scripture and the doctrine of the illumination of the Holy Spirit among other believing interpreters.15 Broeyer’s dissertation on the figure of William Whitaker is closer to Lubbertus both chronologically and in its theological contours, but—somewhat surprisingly given the general Protestant disdain for this approach to hermeneutics—Broeyer describes a very sympathetic reception of the fourfold sense of Scripture as Whitaker refutes Bellarmine on the subject of interpretation.16 DeJonge’s study of Francis Junius is somewhat thin in its observations about prolegomena because DeJonge seems more concerned with the ways in which Junius (and, he generalizes, the whole period of post-Reformation Reformed theologians) could be accused of departing from Calvin by embracing Aristotelian logic and the “central dogma” of predestination.17 Yet, DeJonge does recount how Junius related the authority of the church to the prior authority of Scripture, to which any purely oral tradition must conform.18 Finally, Klauber’s dissertation on J. A. Turrettini’s view of authority in the church concerns many of these same issues in prolegomena a full century after Lubbertus and his contemporaries were writing, but it remains relevant as

15 Maruyama, 221 and 222.

16 Broeyer, William Whitaker: Leven en Werk, 141 and 134. The six sections of Whitaker’s Disputatio de Sacra Scriptura (Cambridge: Thomas Thomas, 1588) concern (1) the canon, (2) the legitimacy of translation, (3) the authority of Scripture, (4) its perspicuity, (5) the interpretation of Scripture and (6) Scripture’s perfection—a similar division to the one used by Lubbertus in his De Principiis.

17 DeJonge, 186-188.

18 DeJonge, 75-76.
one of the few significant studies of prolegomena among the Reformed scholastics at any point in the post-Reformation period.\(^\text{19}\)

One final category of secondary literature also illuminates the writings of Lubbertus on prolegomena—namely, the research on how the Bible was interpreted and applied by Protestant theologians in the time of the Reformation and the post-Reformation era.\(^\text{20}\) When compared with Lubbertus’ *De Principiis*, it is not surprising to find that many of these studies, whether broad or narrow in their focus, tend to complement the foundational assertions of Lubbertus on the limits and authority of the canon (inspiration), the translation of Scripture, the Bible’s essential perspicuity, and the analogy of Scripture (or analogy of faith)—all of these four topics receiving a separate book among the seven books of *De Principiis*.\(^\text{21}\)

The single sub-topic where Lubbertus appears to be most out of step with his fellow Protestant exegetes is in his repeated insistence on the mere grammatical sense (*sensus grammaticus*) of Scripture to the exclusion of all of the fourfold method or other allegorical approaches. Initially, this would appear to contradict a number of convincing surveys of Protestant and Reformed interpretive method which argue for fundamental continuities between medieval allegory/typology and the actual practices of the

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\(^{20}\) Above all, see *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation*, eds. Richard A. Muller and John L. Thompson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), with the introductory essay on the inheritance of medieval exegesis and the summary chapter on the character of precritical exegesis—both of which have enduring value for their digest of the secondary literature on this topic.

\(^{21}\) See the discussion of the sections below.
Reformation and post-Reformation era.  

Nevertheless, the incompatibility between much of this research and the case of Lubbertus may be more appearance than reality given that Lubbertus was writing in a polemical context which obscured the ways in which some forms of allegory were not the sole domain of Bellarmine and the Romanists but in fact were routinely used by his like-minded Protestants to fortify the Bible’s support for distinctly Protestant doctrines.

Lubbertus’ Writings on Prolegomena

Sibrandus Lubbertus offers his most comprehensive treatment of prolegomena in his 1591 refutation of Bellarmine, *De principiis christianorum dogmatum*, because the scope of Bellarmine’s *Controversies* was apparently found both extremely detailed and entirely objectionable by the young professor in Franeker. Both the treatise’s Preface and the dedicatory poem mention Bellarmine by name, and the seven chapters (or, as he calls them, “books”) of *De Principiis* exactly correspond to the original seven divisions of the *Controversies* having to do with topics of prolegomena—whether the canon is a principia, the reliability of the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts, the validity of vernacular translations, the perspicuity of the Bible, the validity of symbolic or spiritualized interpretations of the text (i.e., the fourfold method), the authority of the papacy’s

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interpretations, and the place of tradition. In a later exchange with the Roman Catholic polemicist Jacobus Gretzerius, he defends his earlier approach to the doctrine of Scripture in De Principiis by returning to these same issues now split into four divisions: the canonicity of the apocrypha, the inferiority of the Vulgate, papal infallibility, and the place of tradition. In Lubbertus’ final major publication before his death, his Commentarius upon the Heidelberg Catechism, he again touches on several matters of the doctrine and use of Scripture as the basis for all orthodox Christian doctrine and evangelical proclamation, and these passages are often interesting when they are read in comparison with his earlier polemical assertions which he makes in order to refute Robert Bellarmine.

Our presentation of Lubbertus’ prolegomena as it is found in his major treatises will start with his view of Scripture’s inspiration and authority. Next, we will look at what he says about the correct way of interpreting the Bible. Having done this, we’ll consider how Scripture relates to tradition in Lubbertus’ theology. Our survey will then conclude with a consideration of what he writes about the function of Scripture in the church.

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23 Van der Woude, 74-75. In his narrative of Lubbertus’ life as reflected in his epistolary correspondence, van der Woude mentions that upon De principiis’ publication Lubbertus received letters of congratulation and appreciation from significant contemporaries such as Johann Jakob Grynaeus, Philips van Marnix, David Pareus, Peter Baro, and Theodore Beza. Yet, due to his disappointment with the rather limited distribution of this treatise, van der Woude reports that Lubbertus actually fell into a mild bout of depression during this time. Van der Woude, 76-79.

24 Sibrandus Lubbertus, De principiis christianorum dogmatum: Replicatio ad defensionem primae controversiae Roberti Bellarmini scriptam a Jacobo Gretzero (Franekeræ: Radaeus, 1608).
Lubbertus on Scripture’s Inspiration and Authority

While Lubbertus’ refutation of Bellarmine in *De Principiis* would include a vast number of objections to the Jesuit’s Roman Catholic doctrine, on the very first page he offers a significant point of agreement with Bellarmine. In the opening words of his treatise, Lubbertus admits that his Catholic counterpart is correct in saying that theological disagreements can only be settled when two sides agree on the foundational assumptions—or *principia*—of theology.\(^{25}\) This is why the *principia* of theology must be defined before any disputation over a matter of doctrine. Concerning principia in general, Lubbertus writes, “Omnes artes, omnesque; disciplinae et scientiae habent quaedam principia, ex quibus firmas rationes, et praecceptiones deducunt.”\(^{26}\) He notes that philosophers such as Zabarella distinguish between *principia essendi* and *principia cogniscendi*, but in both cases these principles are “necessary” and “certain” and thus foundational for every conclusion in philosophical matters.\(^{27}\) Likewise, the *principia* of theology must be certain as they are immediately known: “Debent autem esse vera, immediata, i. summe necessaria, priora, notiora, et caussae omnium dogmatum in christianae religione.”\(^{28}\) The doctrine of Scripture, Lubbertus asserts, is the *principium cogniscendi* for Christian doctrine, and in *De Principiis* he argues for the significance of

\(^{25}\) *De Principiis*, 1: “Recte igitur dixit Bellarminus et Theologiam habere sua principia, neq; posse in ea ullam disputationem de rebus controversis recte institui, nisi constet ex quibus principii firma argumenta immotaeque; rationes duci possint.” See also *De Principiis*, 5.

\(^{26}\) *De Principiis*, 1.

\(^{27}\) *De Principiis*, 4: “Unde sequitur Principia debere esse certa, ante concessa, non ambiguam, neque controversam.”

\(^{28}\) *De Principiis*, 1.
this point so that his refutation of Bellarmine might be offered on philosophically-proven grounds in contrast with Bellarmine’s inadequate definitions of such principia or his inconsistent use of them.  

Having made the case that Scripture is rightfully called the principia of all Christian doctrine, he also unpacks what this means relative to the doctrinal debates of the sixteenth century. He does not need to argue at length for the divine origin of God’s Word through inspiration. Bellarmine himself admits this point in regard to the writings of both the prophets and the apostles which are collected in the Bible to be the “certain and immutable rule of faith” (et certam ac stabilem regulam fidei). However, Lubbertus does argue for the necessity of the Scriptures for the salvation of sinners, and then he belabors the point that his Roman Catholic adversaries such as Robert Bellarmine have implicitly denied the necessity of Scripture and then defined the canon of Scripture too broadly so that the message and usefulness of the Scriptures is essentially lost.

The necessity of Scripture is related to man’s inability to know God or the way of salvation due to sin’s corruption. As he states it in his Commentarius, the doctrine of salvation is hidden (abscondita) from human comprehension until it is uniquely revealed.

29 As an example of this critique of Bellarmine, see De Conciliis, 64.

30 He seems to offer a stronger statement about the divine origin of Scripture in his Commentarius for sake of his explanation of the Catechism than he does in his rebuttal of Bellarmine in De Principiis. For example, he writes, “…revelatione divina…proponit certam normam & regulam revelationum divinarum, nempe verbum Dei, intellige verbum scriptum, quod vetus & novum Testamentum appellamus…verbum Dei scriptum esse fundamentum & basin fidei, & in eo solam promissionem gratiae esse illud, in quod fides respicit, cum nobis solatium assert, & animos nostros in spem salutis erigit.” Commentarius, 184-185.

31 De Principiis, 6.
by God in his Word. But, as it is revealed in Scripture, it makes known all which is required for salvation. This is related to his fundamental critique of tradition in the Roman church—if tradition is a source of divine revelation, it suggests that we do not have all that we need for the knowledge of salvation in Scripture, but, he argues, the Scriptures which God has revealed do indeed give us all we need—either by clear expression or by the implications deduced from the text.

In light of Scripture’s foundational importance (even by Bellarmine’s own admission!), Lubbertus has a lengthy treatment of the proper boundaries of the canon in De Principiis, and here of course Lubbertus is out to refute the canonicity of the apocrypha which Bellarmine defends in his Controversies as equally authoritative with the other writings of the prophets and apostles. It is only those books which rightfully belong in the Old Testament and New Testament which should be included in the canon of Scripture—no more, no less (non plures, neq; pauciores). Lubbertus’ refutation in this section reflects the various tools of scholastic rhetoric. For example, as Bellarmine is quick to use the fathers to support the assertion of the apocrypha’s canonicity, Lubbertus challenges that by offering a more uncertain judgment among the early church when one

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32 Commentarius, 165: “Doctrina haec est mundo abscondita, necullo humanae rationis lumine comprehendi potest…” Fortunately, he explains, it has been revealed by God in his Word.


34 De Principiis, 604: “Nos aimus et dicimus, omnia quae ad salutem necessaria sunt, verbo Dei scripto contineri, ideoque in hunc modum, ut vel in eo expressa sint, vel ex eo necessario deduci possint. Papistae hoc negant, et dicunt omnia ad salutem necessaria non contineri verbo scripto, ita, ut illa omnia neque in verbo scripto expresse posita sint, neque ex eo necessario deduci possint.” See the discussion of Lubbertus on Scripture and tradition below.

35 De Principiis, 6.

36 De Principiis, 7.
consults a greater number of church fathers.\textsuperscript{37} He also details how the textual support for the apocryphal endings to Daniel and Esther is rather doubtful—thus failing to meet the criteria for any \textit{principia} as being beyond controversy, and in some cases he concludes that the events described in the endings to Daniel and Esther are verifiably false based on a comparison with other historical records.\textsuperscript{38} When Bellarmine seems to stumble over the mixed opinions of the fathers regarding the apocrypha, explaining that they were merely uncertain which books belonged in the \textit{Jewish} canon during the Old Testament period, Lubbertus seizes the rhetorical high ground by insisting that what was canonical during the Old Testament period remains canonical for Christians in the church as well, since these two canons are one and the same in their divine inspiration and their inherent authority for believers.\textsuperscript{39}

With each and every one of the apocryphal books—Baruch, Tobias, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus/Sirach and Maccabees in turn—Lubbertus gives specific evidence that these books were always fraught with internal inconsistencies\textsuperscript{40}, they were questioned for their historical inaccuracies when compared to other ancient sources\textsuperscript{41}, each one was widely questioned by some of the most respected of the church fathers\textsuperscript{42},

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{De Principiis}, 17-33, 35-37.

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{De Principiis}, 33-51.

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{De Principiis}, 37, 40: “Si igitur hi libri non fuerunt in canone Iudaico; sequitur eos in canone Christiano esse non posse. Quod enim Iudaicus canon non habet; hoc Christianus canon ab eo accipere non potest….Manifestum igitur apud Christianos & apud Iudaeos unum & eundem canonem esse Veteris Testamenti.”

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{De Principiis}, 59-62 (for Esther), and 104-112 (for Wisdom).

\textsuperscript{41} \textit{De Principiis}, 62 (for Esther), 99-104 (for Judith), and 117-131 (for Maccabees).

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{De Principiis}, 51 (for Esther, where Athanasius and Gregory Nazianzus are quoted against canonical inclusion), 62-63 (Jerome, Origin and Nicolas of Lyra suggest that Esther’s apocryphal
they suffer from textual corruption given the widely different readings between the Vulgate and the Greek manuscripts\textsuperscript{43}, or they are simply inconsistent with the doctrine taught in the books of the Old and New Testaments.\textsuperscript{44} In short, the apocrypha never reached anything like the standard of clear and unquestioned veracity which would be demanded of any principia of Christian doctrine. By Lubbertus’ assessment, this shows that the apocrypha falls far short of the criteria for principia which are met by every single book of the Old Testament and by every book of the New Testament as well.\textsuperscript{45}

The particular topics covered in the Heidelberg Catechism provide Lubbertus a chance to elaborate on the consequences of the divine inspiration for the whole of the canon when he arrives at question and answer number nineteen in the catechism. Prompted by the catechism’s answer about the one Gospel proclaimed throughout redemptive history, Lubbertus offers a good discussion about how the doctrine of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ was consistently proclaimed from the time of the proto-evangelion right after Adam’s fall up through the time of the patriarchs, the Exodus, the nation of Israel, the prophetic books and into the apostolic church. While this is primarily an exegetical survey of biblical history and not a passage of polemics or even doctrinal emphasis (as in his refutations of Bellarmine), Lubbertus notes that such

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{43} De Principiis, 74-82 (for Tobias), 91-99 (for Judith), and 117-131 (for Maccabees).
\item\textsuperscript{44} De Principiis, 104-112 (for Wisdom).
\item\textsuperscript{45} De Principiis, 42 and 131-132.
\end{itemize}
church fathers as Justin Martyr and Irenaeus wrote similar surveys concerning the unity of doctrine over redemptive history, and he thus shows how his doctrine of the canon of Scripture is employed to appreciate the continuities of God’s acts of revelation throughout redemptive history.\(^{46}\)

The last major aspect to Lubbertus’ polemical treatment of Scripture’s inspiration and authority is the matter of Scripture’s manuscript tradition and the validity of translations into the vernacular. These are important matters in their own right, but Lubbertus addresses them each with a full “book” of his \textit{De Principiis}—book two supporting the superior authority of the Greek and Hebrew compared to the Vulgate, and book three as a defense of translations from the Greek and Hebrew into the vernacular. These book divisions highlight how important the Vulgate is for Bellarmine’s view of Scripture’s authority for the church. In contrast with Bellarmine and the Counter-Reformation’s decrees about the Latin Vulgate, Lubbertus seeks to show that there is no single translation of the Bible which makes it more authoritative (much less, he would say, a flawed translation such as the Vulgate!), but it is the original writings of the prophets and apostles in the original Hebrew and Greek which are inspired of God and are therefore worthy of accurate and accessible translation for the Christian church among all the languages where she is found.

In arguing against the sole authority of the Vulgate, Lubbertus shows himself to be a keen observer of the Roman Catholic tradition which Bellarmine seeks to protect. For example, his refutation of Bellarmine is mostly drawn from the inconsistencies of the church fathers or even the inconsistencies and absurdities of sixteenth century Catholic

\(^{46}\) \textit{Commentarius}, 166-172.
theologians rather than from well-known Protestant opinions about the inadequacies of the Vulgate as a translation. He does, of course, express great disapproval with many of the particular renderings of the Vulgate at many different passages of the biblical text, but this is only one part of his critique which he offers after addressing the underlying problems of insisting that the Vulgate alone is authoritative.

Back in the time of Martin Luther, Johannes Eck had suggested that Scripture is not authoritative without the authority of the Roman church acknowledging that authority and in effect giving it that authority. This view, which Lubbertus sees reaffirmed by Bellarmine, ought to be problematic for Bellarmine and the Roman Catholics, though, because this recognition of the Vulgate by the church at some point in history suggests that it is not Scripture itself which is immediately known and free from controversy—as a principium must always be, even on Bellarmine’s own argument. Only the original Greek sources and Hebrew sources behind the Vulgate could ever be principia of Christian doctrine through being immediately known and free from controversy, since they are obviously historically prior to the Vulgate’s appearance as well as prior to the pope’s judgment that the Vulgate is authoritative. If it is the pope’s determination or approval of the Vulgate which ultimately confirms it as authoritative, this might make the pope’s approval a possible principium for Christian doctrine, but Lubbertus says it certainly makes it problematic to say that canonical Scripture is a principium since on its own it was not authoritative prior to a pope’s affirmation.48

47 As he quotes Eck, “Scripturam non esse authenticam sine autoritate Ecclesia.” De Principiis, 47.

48 De Principiis, 228-230.
Bellarmine tries to suggest that it is the Hebrew and Greek manuscript traditions which are riddled with corruption and uncertainty when compared with the Vulgate. Lubbertus, however, is not willing to grant this, and argues point-by-point against Bellarmine’s assertions in order to maintain the superiority of the Hebrew and Greek. His treatment of the Old Testament manuscripts is considerably longer and more detailed than his consideration of New Testament texts, but he offers a plain assessment of the matter in favor of both. Bellarmine had compiled an index of textual problems with the Hebrew sources, and he was clever enough to cite where even John Calvin and Martin Chemnitz had been critical of the received Hebrew manuscripts. In his response to this part of Bellarmine, Lubbertus defends the authenticity of the Hebrew in each of those cases, even distancing himself from Calvin and Chemnitz where he finds the great Geneva reformer or the respected Lutheran dogmatician to appear too cavalier with respect to the Hebrew. He also sneaks in a somewhat sarcastic observation about the Hebrew being sufficiently authentic for Jesus and the Apostle Paul—implying that we might not be so quick to think otherwise.

But the possible textual problems in Hebrew are only part of the issue to be confronted. Lubbertus is amused at how insistent Bellarmine can be over the Vulgate’s

49 As for the Hebrew texts, he writes, “…Hebreos libros ab omni corruptione liberos esse, et proinde esse authenticos.” De Principiis, 134.

50 De Principiis, 134-145 and 197-211. Lubbertus does this by challenging whether possible examples of textual corruption are proven by Bellarmine to be corrupt or whether they are suggested to be so without convincing evidence. De Principiis, 145: “Nisi igitur Bellarminus ostendat, Hebraeos libros mutilatos esse, frustra laborat.” Later in his discussion, he again voices dissatisfaction with Calvin concerning the quality of the Hebrew manuscripts he uses in his commentary upon the Psalms. De Principiis, 211-219.

51 De Principiis, 147.
superiority when it was written several centuries after the apostles and was not officially embraced by the Roman Catholic Church until relatively recently at Trent. Therefore, the record of church history includes many doctors who accepted the Hebrew as authentic—including Jerome (the supposed translator of the Vulgate) and Augustine. This pattern is evidenced in both the prior church councils before Trent and in an overwhelming number of theologians who assumed that the earliest manuscripts in Hebrew should be the ones used to settle controversies—such as Cardinal Cajetan did when he argued from the Hebrew in his opposition to Luther. While Bellarmine holds that the 1000-year history of the Vulgate is evidence of its authenticity, Lubbertus remarks that the Hebrew dates back much earlier, and he gives a list of patristic citations where other ancient translations were also praised by respected fathers. The Italian translation of the Scriptures, for example, was commended for its faithfulness by Augustine, Gregory and Isidor. The Septuagint was advocated at different times by Justin, Irenaeus, Eusebius, Clement, Epiphanius, Chrysostom, Cyril, Tertullian, Augustine, Hilary and Jerome.

Lubbertus’ argument for the Greek New Testament as original, authentic, and authoritative follows similar lines as he continues to chip away at Bellarmine’s notion of the Vulgate’s superiority and worthiness of being a principium of Christian doctrine. He

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52 *De Principiis*, 148-149. As for Jerome’s relationship to the Vulgate, Lubbertus questions his authorship given the large number of places where the translation Jerome supplies in his writings vary from what is found in the Vulgate. *De Principiis*, 163-165.

53 *De Principiis*, 146, although the recitation of pre-Tridentine patterns is found from 145-155.

54 *De Principiis*, 176.

55 *De Principiis*, 178.

56 *De Principiis*, 179.
again finds plentiful support for the Greek codices of the New Testament among the church fathers.\textsuperscript{57} Even the most faithful Catholic exegetes of the late medieval period—whom Lubbertus colorfully dubs the “Papistici doctores”—showed preference for the Greek over the Latin Vulgate—including Leo X, Valla, Cajetan and others.\textsuperscript{58}

In the end, Lubbertus concludes that the Vulgate is an inferior text when compared with the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament, and therefore it should not be treated as the most authentic of the ancient manuscripts, let alone function as a \textit{principium} for Christian doctrine. In making this judgment, he gladly stands not only with the consensus of Protestant theologians who reject the Vulgate, but he also cites the large number of pre-Tridentine Catholics who have found errors in the Vulgate, thus effectively challenging its authority for Christian doctrine before the decisions of Trent and the writings of Bellarmine.\textsuperscript{59} Lubbertus writes, “Iunctum enim et controversum, quicquid dicat Bellarminus, numquam nobis erit principium.”\textsuperscript{60}

While the very name “Vulgate” suggests that it is a translation into the vernacular, most of the sixteenth century included a perpetual debate between Catholics and Protestants concerning whether the Vulgate ought to be set aside for the sake of translations into the languages far more commonly known than Latin. Bellarmine and the

\textsuperscript{57} \textit{De Principiis}, 225.

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{De Principiis}, 228.


\textsuperscript{60} \textit{De Principiis}, 175. At the end of his book he summarizes what he has sought to prove about the Vulgate: “Principia Christianorum dogmatum debent esse certa, extra controversiam posita, vera, integra et divina. At vulgata versio est incerta, in controversia posita, falsa, mutilata, aucta, depravata et humana. Ergo vulgata versio non potest esse principium Christianorum dogmatum.”\textsuperscript{De Principiis, 238.}
Council of Trent opposed this practice; Lubbertus, of course, favored it for both theological and practical reasons, and he devoted the third book of *De Principiis* to this bone of contention with Robert Bellarmine. The preference for the Latin Vulgate was not entirely arbitrary because—in addition to being a widely used translation into Latin, a widely known language of the ancient world—the Catholics liked to point out that both the third and fourth gospels mention that the sign over Jesus’ cross was written in Hebrew/Aramaic, Greek and Latin: supposedly a divine approval for these three sanctified languages.\(^{61}\) Bellarmine also was convinced that the gospel according to Mark was originally written in Latin.\(^{62}\) Along with a number of citations of the church fathers and the official declarations of the Roman church about the Vulgates’ unique authority as an approved translation, these were the sorts of arguments which substantiated Bellarmine’s position for the Latin Vulgate.

Lubbertus was not opposed to the idea of a Latin translation of the Bible. He gladly accepts the arguments which Bellarmine makes justifying a Latin translation of the whole Bible. However, Lubbertus thought that Latin was just one among all of the known languages in the world which ought to have its own translation of the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures, and so he points out that everything Bellarmine writes in support of a Latin translation would be just as valid as an argument for translations of the Scriptures into all languages.\(^{63}\)

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\(^{62}\) Lubbertus rejected this theory of the second gospel for historical reasons. *De Principiis*, 268-270.

\(^{63}\) *De Principiis*, 254-255 and 290-293.
The translation of the Bible into the common language was addressed in the early church, and so again Lubbertus seeks to beat Bellarmine at his own game by speaking of the church fathers who advocated either vernacular translations of Scripture (among them, Jerome, Chrysostom, Gregory the Great, and Nicolas of Lyra\textsuperscript{64}) or public worship services in the vernacular (citing Nicolas of Lyra and Thomas Aquinas\textsuperscript{65}) as well as the ancient examples of vernacular translations into some twenty different languages of antiquity.\textsuperscript{66} Lubbertus ties this in to various biblical passages which make it clear that Jesus himself and the apostles went out of their way to communicate in the common languages of their audiences\textsuperscript{67}, and he gives an extended explanation of 1 Corinthians 14 concerning the principle of intelligibility in worship, since this seems to be relevant to why translations are not only \textit{permissible} but are \textit{mandated} for the Christian church.\textsuperscript{68} Only through translation into the known languages of the world, Lubbertus explains, can

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{De Principiis}, 255-256.

\textsuperscript{65} \textit{De Principiis}, 298 and 299: “Unde apparat, omnes populos vernacula lingua sacra publica administrasse...Ex his apparat omnes populos tempore primitivae Ecclesiae sacra publica fecisse lingua vernacular.” Lubbertus’ repeated use of the phrase “sacra publica” is something of a curiosity in this part of his book. As found in William Smith’s \textit{Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities} (Boston: C. Little and J. Brown, 1870), \textit{sacra publica} in classical literature refers to “divine worship...performed...on behalf of the whole nation and at the expense of the state.” Smith, 998. While it is a bit speculative, Lubbertus’ use of this term in his refutation of Bellarmine’s \textit{Controversies} might be a rhetorical strategy derived from classical sources to insist that translation of the Scriptures into the vernacular is not just consistent with the Bible and the practice of the early church; it is a characteristic of all civilized nations, even going back to ancient times when such translation was not serving the needs of Christianity. Lubbertus was certainly capable of such an appropriation of ancient literature. The question is whether \textit{sacra publica} had some other technical meaning by the time of the late sixteenth century.

\textsuperscript{66} \textit{De Principiis}, 243ff and 278.

\textsuperscript{67} \textit{De Principiis}, 329-330.

\textsuperscript{68} \textit{De Principiis}, 293-294.
the Christian church give witness, make confession of faith in Christ, conduct worship, and offer service as God commands in the Bible. ⁶⁹

Besides arguments from the Bible and from historical example in the church, Lubbertus expresses some practical and pastoral considerations in support of Bible translations into the vernacular of the people. Bellarmine argues that even an unknown language can edify the people in worship just as the symbolism of the priests’ actions in Old Covenant worship had edified the Israelites, ⁷⁰ but Lubbertus rejects this justification as going against the biblical commandment for translation and contradicting the biblical principle that the congregation will be most edified in worship as they understand God’s word being ministered to them. ⁷¹ The use of an unknown language renders worship “useless” (inutile) for the church, and so Augustine was quite right to advocate only using known languages in worship—“Nemo aedificatur audiendo, quod non intelligit.” ⁷² Opposition to vernacular translations, Lubbertus points out, essentially amounts to a disregard for the edification of the people, to say nothing of the resulting impossibility for any laity to read the scriptures with understanding on their own. ⁷³ As a consequence, a


⁷⁰ See De Principiis, 313.

⁷¹ Cf. De Principiis, 303, where he offers the two primary reasons for the use of the vernacular in public worship—“Unus respectu Dei, alter respectu populi. Respectu Dei, gloria et honor Dei. Respectu populi, aedificatio populi.”

⁷² De Principiis, 306.

⁷³ De Principiis, 248.
limitation to the Vulgate is an invitation for Satan to bring trouble upon the church when the word of God is used but confined to an unknown language.\textsuperscript{74} Thus, it is both a practical necessity and a matter of divine command that God’s word and all matters of public worship reflect the common language of the people.\textsuperscript{75}

**Lubbertus on the Interpretation of Scripture**

Beyond the issue of Scripture’s authority as an inspired text and its relative authority in its original languages from ancient Hebrew and Greek manuscripts versus vernacular translations, Lubbertus has much to say in *De Principiis* in polemical refutation to what Bellarmine writes about biblical interpretation in his *Controversies*. Bellarmine gives particular attention to the Protestant reformers’ view of perspicuity (which he rejects) and to their preference for the grammatical sense (the *sensus grammaticus*, which he also rejects) in order to defend papal interpretation as the only definitive interpretation of the text given its obscurities and multiple meanings. In light of these arguments by Bellarmine, the fourth book of *De Principiis* defends perspicuity, the fifth book defends the single grammatical sense over the *quadriga* or four-fold method of interpreting the Scripture’s various allegorical meanings (which Bellarmine supports), and the sixth book critiques papal infallibility as an unnecessary means for certainty since the analogy of scripture is more certain than a Roman pontiff. All of these

\textsuperscript{74} *De Principiis*, 242. This brief sermon on the work of Satan shows the flexibility of the polemical genre to go from logical refutation to biblical argumentation to pastoral applications—all in the space of one page.

\textsuperscript{75} *De Principiis*, 332: “Manifestum igitur aut eos non errare, qui sacra publica nota lingua celebrant, aut Christum, Apostolos, & universam primitivam Ecclesiam, qui idem fecerunt, errasse. Imo aut Christus, Apostoli, aut tota primitive Ecclesia errarunt, dum sacra publica lingua nota administrarunt, aut Papistae errant, dum publica sacra ignota lingua administrant.”
books address the primary controversies in biblical interpretation between the Roman Catholics and Protestants in the sixteenth century.

When he criticizes the Protestant notion of perspicuity, Bellarmine scoffs at the implication that any untrained layperson can understand the Scriptures with complete clarity. In *De Principiis*, Lubbertus sees an opportunity to clarify what Protestants mean by perspicuity since Bellarmine seems to be greatly obscuring this notion, whether it is intentional or unintentional on his part.\(^76\) Far from suggesting that every passage of the Bible can be perfectly understood by any person, Lubbertus explains that perspicuity is as much about the illumination of the Holy Spirit (who is at work in the church) as it is about the text and the message it holds. In fact, he continues, many passages are indeed obscure, and yet by the internal work of the Spirit the truth of Christian doctrine is made clear to the believer.\(^77\) Therefore, the meaning of Scripture is not hopelessly obscure until the church (i.e., the pope) gives an authoritative interpretation, as Bellarmine suggests.\(^78\) Rather, according to the promise of the Scripture itself, the meaning of any passage can be known with clarity through a combination of the two ways the Bible can be known—Lubbertus calls them “the external way and the internal way” (*externo modo & interno*) of knowing.\(^79\) To explain the latter of these two first, the internal way of knowing is when it is immediately revealed by God through the work of the Holy Spirit, and because it is God who reveals Scripture’s meaning in this way, it is not subject to

\(^{76}\) *De Principiis*, 334.

\(^{77}\) *De Principiis*, 342, 337.

\(^{78}\) Cf. *De Principiis*, 339-350.

\(^{79}\) *De Principiis*, 343.
error.\textsuperscript{80} The external way is when scripture’s interpretation is not immediately given by God but rather it is the result of human study.\textsuperscript{81} This way is decidedly different from the internal way because one can fall into error in the external way of knowing, but the illumination of the Holy Spirit is the corrective to the fallible character of a simply external knowledge of Scripture.

In refuting Bellarmine’s argument for the necessarily obscure meaning of the Scriptures apart from the church’s interpretation, Lubbertus introduces another spin on the perspicuity of Scripture—namely, the fact that every part of the Bible is either Law or Gospel.\textsuperscript{82} Since these are the two fundamental parts to biblical revelation, the difficulty of interpretation is significantly reduced when one knows to identify any given passage as falling into one of these categories. When the Reformers like Martin Luther and others spoke about Law and Gospel, they were more concerned about preserving clear doctrine on soteriology than they were seeking to defend the perspicuity of Scripture, but Lubbertus again shows a clever approach to polemics by taking a favorite topic of early Protestant theology and showing it also has use in undermining the best efforts of the Counter-Reformation, exemplified by the Council of Trent and Robert Bellarmine.

In addition to opposing the perspicuity of Scripture, Bellarmine also argues for the validity of the four-fold method of interpretation since the sense of any passage of Scripture is, as he puts it, “multiplex”—including a literal sense (immediately carried by the words) and a spiritual sense (when the literal/grammatical meaning is to be taken

\textsuperscript{80} De Principiis, 557-559.

\textsuperscript{81} De Principiis, 560-561.

\textsuperscript{82} De Principiis, 366: “…tota scriptura dividitur in Legem & Evangelium.”
figuratively). As in the medieval *quadriga*, that spiritual sense can be divided up into three different parts: allegorical, anagogical, and tropological. Lubbertus is emphatically opposed to Bellarmine’s assertions on this matter because, in his view, the resulting interpretations of the Bible by the medieval and Counter-Reformation theologians who followed the *quadriga* have introduced many errors into the church. But, beyond his concern about the false or dubious interpretations offered by various Catholic theologians, Lubbertus criticizes Bellarmine’s explanation for being simply self-contradictory—on the one hand speaking of a grammatical sense, but on the other hand speaking of that grammatical sense as being figurative.  

For his part, Lubbertus says that there is only one true and legitimate sense for any passage—the literal/grammatical sense; and so he rejects Bellarmine’s view of the “multiplex” sense for every passage. However, his initial rejection ends up getting some explanation and nuance as he unpacks what this means for the interpretation of the Bible. In fact, Lubbertus offers so many qualifications to his assertion about this one literal sense that he ends up presenting a number of ways in which Scripture must have figurative or symbolic meanings, but this symbolism is simply restrained by interpretive principles which Bellarmine fails to make explicit. Perhaps it is just the language of “multiple senses” which Lubbertus dislikes because it is misleading.

83 *De Principiis*, 395 and 397.

84 *De Principiis*, 399. See also page 406, where Lubbertus quotes a passage from Bellarmine’s *De Verbo Dei* on the quadriga (Book 3, chapter 3) before giving a refutation of that passage.

85 *De Principiis*, 397.

86 *De Principiis*, 409ff.
For Bellarmine (who is himself following interpreters going back to Augustine), this terminology is suitable because God is the author and he is able to give many senses to the same passage of Scripture. Lubbertus, however, starts out more cautiously with the generalization that allegory is only rightfully used in prophetic passages of the Bible. He objects to the notion that this is true in the entire Bible if it is only true for a select number of passages. Where it is appropriate to look for allegorical symbolism, Lubbertus notes that one of the following is true—either the literal meaning would be absurd, or the literal interpretation would be shameful, or the literal meaning would in some sense be false. But, in a slight but important contrast to Bellarmine, Lubbertus stresses that the meaning of any single passage is governed by the doctrine of the whole of the Scripture, and so the faithful interpreter should always expect a complete harmony between, for example, the words of Jesus and the apostles on the one hand and the books of Moses on the other. Within the canonical books of the Bible, there can only ever be one sense, but that one sense can vary as it must stand in agreement with the rest of Scripture. In these cases where the unity of the Scriptures demands a figurative reading, this is only possible, Lubbertus says, because one starts with the literal sense to

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87 De Principiis, 407-408.

88 De Principiis, 419.

89 De Principiis, 412-413. Presumably this internal consistency of the Scripture without the need for the intrusion of philosophy or other extra-biblical considerations is behind his comment in another place advocating the “analytical method” of approaching theology as opposed to the “synthetic method.” He cites John Calvin and the Heidelberg Catechism as examples of the analytical method. The synthetic method is supposedly modeled by Thomas Aquinas and Jerome Zanchi. See Lubbertus, Commentarius, 6.

90 De Principiis, 422.
arrive at this proper interpretation. Bellarmine’s misstep on this topic is that he confuses what is meant by “literal sense” and “spiritual sense,” but Lubbertus tries to offer more precise definitions of these terms to avoid confusion and to bring restraint to the interpretation of the Bible—just as he claims Thomas Aquinas and the great medieval interpreters of the Bible had modeled in the past.

Bellarmine’s statements about the obscurity of Scripture and the lack of any single sense of a biblical text are simply part of his justification for the most important thing said by the Council of Trent on the topic of interpretation—infallible interpretation has been given to the church, especially through the pronouncements of the papacy. Lubbertus, of course, rejects every part of this assertion because God has given a far more reliable means for certainty in the interpretation of Scripture than anything Bellarmine describes—the certainty which comes through interpreting Scripture with other Scripture. It is therefore the analogy of faith—not the approval of the pope—which establishes the true sense of any passage of Scripture. At this point in De Principiis, Lubbertus begins to anticipate some of the issues and arguments which he will present at greater length in his later treatises which also refute on Bellarmine with respect to the papacy, the church, and church councils. These several topics are so closely related for Lubbertus that it is hard to adequately address one of them without discussing the others.

91 De Principiis, 412.

92 De Principiis, 398.

93 De Principiis, 422.

94 See the presentations below in chapter 4 on ecclesiology and chapter 5 on church councils. These later treatises are De papa Romano, libri decem: scholastice & theologice collati cum disputationibus Roberti Bellarmini (Academia Franekerana: Aegidivm Radaevm, 1594); De Ecclesia, Libri Sex: Collati cum disputationibus Roberti Bellarmini (Franekeræ, Excudebat
To establish that infallible interpretation of the Bible is not found in the work of Roman Catholic popes or the councils which are given papal approval, Lubbertus contrasts the fallibility of popes and councils with the immutable truth of Scripture and the infallibility which belongs to God as the author of Scripture. Contrary to what Bellarmine claims, indubitable truth and infallible interpretation are not the fruit of the catholicity supposedly expressed when the pope presides over a council. Simply as a historical argument, Lubbertus suggests that Bellarmine’s claim would make several more recent councils “catholic” due to the pope’s presiding over them while suggesting that the whole early church somehow lacked catholicity for practicing otherwise, as in rejecting the apocrypha and giving the cup to the laity. He also points out that many past church councils which were given papal approval can be seen as advocating contradictory positions on various matters of doctrine, which is also a big problem for Bellarmine’s view of their respective expressions of infallibility in matters of interpreting the Bible and teaching doctrine. Furthermore, Lubbertus questions whether Bellarmine is correct in seeing Acts 15 as a proof text for councils arriving at infallible interpretation due to the pope’s leadership at them (following’s Peter’s example as the “first pope”). Indeed, Peter was no pope since he was clearly an apostle with a very different role than any pope has had, and the pronouncement of any council—whether the Jerusalem

Aegidivs Radaevs, 1607); and De conciliis libri quinque: scholastice & theologice collati cum disputationibus Roberti Bellarmini (Genevae: Samuelem Crispinum, 1601).

95 De Principiis, 555.

96 De Principiis, 482-489.

97 De Principiis, 511.

98 See De Principiis, 468-469.
Council in Acts 15 or any other throughout the history of the church—is only as strong as it finds support in God’s word. When a pope speaks outside or against what is found in the Scripture, as they have many times according to Lubbertus, their teaching has no authority and must be rejected—“even if a thousand popes should assert it.”

But while popes and councils are on their own quite fallible, Lubbertus explains, there is infallibility evident in the analogy of faith when Scripture becomes its own interpreter. The most perfect and authoritative interpreter, hypothetically speaking, would have to have four characteristics: inability to err, not being subject to challenge, impartiality, and the ability to draw together the “parts” (partes) to “obedience” (obedientia). Fallen humans are not able to meet any of these requirements—including the pope; but God himself meets all of these requirements, and so his interpretation by the whole of canonical Scripture and the illumination and sanctification of the Holy Spirit can rightfully be called an “infallible” interpretation which is given for the church.

Another way of saying this is that it is not the pope or the council led by the pope which is the greatest and most authoritative interpreter of Scripture since Jesus Christ himself is the greatest interpreter of Scripture. Lubbertus then goes on to describe a two-fold way in which Jesus calls others to be judges of interpretation and doctrine in light of his

99 De Conciliis, 29: “Quod vero extra sacram Scripturam asseritur, id non recipimus, etiamsi mille Papae illud assererent.”

100 De Principiis, 554ff.

101 De Principiis, 556: “Porro solus Deus potest voluntates nostras ad suam obedientiam cogere. Ille item solus est ipsa veritas, et non potest errare, neque ullius partis studio trahitur, neque ulli homini ab ipsius iudicio provocare licet. Ille igitur est supremus interpretationis iudex. De interpretatione est idem iudicium.”

102 De Principiis, 561: “Supremus iudex omnium interpretationum est Iesus Christus.”
supreme role. Publicly, Jesus calls ministers of the gospel to be judges of doctrine for the sake of his church. Privately, though, Jesus charges all believers to be guardians of pure doctrine through faithfully adhering to his word.\textsuperscript{103}

**Lubbertus on Scripture and Tradition in the Church**

This brings us to the place of tradition as a source for doctrine. As a simple black and white generalization, one could say that Lubbertus denies the place of tradition in formulating doctrine whereas Bellarmine advocates a role both for Scripture and for tradition—this is Lubbertus’ primary argument in the seventh book of *De Principiis* over and against what Bellarmine writes in his *Controversies*. However, even as we just described in Lubbertus’ views on interpretation and infallibility, the Protestant polemicist in Franeker is very conscious of the role of the church and her greatest teachers over the course of history. Lubbertus expects there to be an important expression of church authority when faithful officers in every age of the church discern the meaning of Scripture and declare it to God’s people. Therefore, Lubbertus denies the place of tradition which Bellarmine gives it in arriving at doctrine (namely, calling it a *principium*), but he also presents an understanding of the deposit of truth in the church which goes beyond the mere slogan of *sola Scriptura* since Scripture is received, interpreted and proclaimed in the church.

As always, Lubbertus starts by defining the term as his Jesuit adversary uses it to clarify what he is rejecting and to expose any contradictions which might be found even

\textsuperscript{103} *De Principiis*, 562.
before he offers a thorough refutation. Bellarmine, like Eccio and Emzero before him\(^\text{104}\), defines tradition as teachings—especially on ceremonies, rituals and dogma—which are neglected in canonical Scripture and yet equally authoritative with Scripture since they are part of the “living voice” of the church which occasionally comes to expression through papal proclamation.\(^\text{105}\) To put it into the terminology which Lubbertus uses through his treatise, Roman Catholicism holds that tradition is a second principium of Christian doctrine in addition to the Bible, which is a principium. In the opening pages of book seven of De Principiis, he notes that this dispute is at the heart of so many differences between Catholics and Protestants which all stem from either a commitment either to Scripture’s unique authority or Scripture’s insufficiency on its own.\(^\text{106}\)

As soon as Lubbertus has defined the term, though, he goes on the attack, first questioning the lack of support for this notion of tradition. Most importantly, Lubbertus argues that this notion of tradition as Robert Bellarmine and the Roman Catholic Church present it is unknown in the Scriptures. While he is aware of arguments from apocryphal texts, supportive renderings in the Vulgate, and of course the pope’s own interpretations of Scripture which advocate for tradition as a second principium, none of these are sufficient to establish the doctrine of tradition’s authority because these are all

\(^{104}\) Lubbertus is referring to Johannes Eck (1486-1543), but it is not clear who “Emzero” is.

\(^{105}\) De Principiis, 593ff.

\(^{106}\) De Principiis, 606-607. Here he summarizes the areas of fundamental disagreement “between the orthodox and the papists” (inter orthodoxos et papistas) in the form of three questions: Do the Scriptures contain all things necessary unto salvation? Is the whole tradition of the apostles to be observed in all times and places by all men? Are the Romanist rituals, ceremonies and dogmas to be observed still as principia of Christian dogma?
questionable sources. As Lubbertus argues at length in *De Principiis*, only the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament can meet the criteria of a *principium*, and so any doctrine which is not ultimately supported by Scripture does not meet the requirements for being Christian doctrine.

Throughout *De Principiis*, Lubbertus also implies a criticism of tradition when it is in contradiction with itself or in contradiction with God’s word. Both popes and the church fathers can be shown to contradict themselves and each other at various points. He asks, therefore, how this can be considered an infallible source of doctrine when it is not even in agreement with itself. He notes that such fathers as Justin, Irenaeus, Basil and Polycarp are cited in support of one coherent Roman Catholic tradition, but he identifies factual and theological errors in each of their writings. Even the conciliar decrees are not in perfect agreement with each other, as he shows in the confusion of the Catholic tradition concerning the canon of Scripture. All of these things pose significant challenges to the idea of an authoritative tradition in the church based on the pronouncements of the pope, a council, or both. In effect, the Roman Catholic is forced to defend a constantly changing body of pronouncements with questionable biblical support—a great contrast to the unchangeable rule of Scripture which Lubbertus

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107 *De Principiis*, 593ff.

108 *De Principiis*, 15ff.

109 *De Principiis*, 30 and 32.

110 *De Principiis*, 9-10.

111 *De Principiis*, 657-661.
says is intended to be the church’s “Lydian stone” (lydius lapis) for Christian doctrine. Therefore he finds the notion of a “living voice” in tradition to be a fundamental departure from the Bible’s assertions that God’s revelation through the prophets and apostles is sufficient for the salvation of the church.

While Lubbertus seeks to overturn the view of tradition which is advocated by Bellarmine (who himself is supporting the conclusions of the Council of Trent), his polemical method is more sophisticated than simply a direct refutation from the Scripture with a few syllogisms and a bit of scoffing along the way. Even while doing these things, he often seeks to reclaim aspects to the idea of church tradition which might be compatible with what he argues about canonical Scripture’s unique place as a principium.

For example, in one section of book seven in De Principiis, Lubbertus cleverly concedes that there is a church tradition to be preserved, and he grants to Bellarmine that the Apostle Paul even wrote about this tradition. However, he carefully explains, Paul would often use the term “tradition” not as Bellarmine means—namely, as a second and distinct source for doctrine apart for the Bible—but rather as a way to speak about the doctrine which is proclaimed in the Scriptures. As we have seen in Lubbertus’

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112 De Principiis, 711. On 710-711, he comments on the incongruity between the command to neither add to nor take away from the word of God, on the one hand, and the papist notion of a constantly changing word of God based on “tradition,” on the other. He writes, “Traditiones enim, de quibus cum papistis contendimus, mutarunt ea....” David Pareus likely borrows this same metaphor of the Lydian stone from Lubbertus when he writes over twenty years later about the exclusive authority of the Scriptures for the Christian church, even in her councils and synods. “...[Q]uae ipsa suprmi iudicis vox est viva: et de Christo abunde testificatur, ideoque; merito est Lydius lapsis, et regula omnis iudicii, conciliorumque ecclesiasticorum omnium.” David Pareus, Irenicum sive de Unione et Synodo Evangelicorum concilianda Liber Votivus, Paci Ecclesiae et desiderijs pacificorum dicatus (Heidelberg: Johannes Lancellotus, 1615), 27.

113 De Principiis, 644.

114 De Principiis, 652.
frequent appeals to the church fathers (whether ancient or modern\textsuperscript{115}), he granted them an authoritative status as the most important of Scripture’s interpreters, and yet they themselves stood under the Scriptures since only God’s word is a \textit{principium} for doctrine. If this is a rejection of what Bellarmine meant by tradition, it was certainly an attempt to salvage an aspect to tradition’s authority in ways which would be compatible with a Protestant view of canonical Scripture’s unique authority.

It was not always easy for the Protestant Reformers and post-Reformation theologians to identify themselves with the church fathers while also distancing themselves with the faulty views of Roman Catholicism. In the polemical context of Bellarmine and Lubbertus, therefore, an ongoing polemical matter concerned whether the ancients—and Augustine in particular—offered more support to the sixteen century Protestants or their Catholic adversaries. Both sides wanted to claim Augustine for their own views. In particular, the Catholics loved to point out that Augustine himself had seemed to speak of tradition and the church’s separate witness as verifying the truth of Scripture when he wrote that he “…would not have believed the Gospel apart from [the authority of] the church.” Lubbertus, though, explains that Augustine is wrongly interpreted when he is thought to be affirming the imperfection of Scripture alone through these words. Rather, the church confirms the Gospel by her testimony which itself emerges from the Scriptures. He proceeds to argue that this reading of Augustine is

\textsuperscript{115} Among the fathers, Lubbertus has the greatest respect for the fathers and doctors of the ancient church, but he cites the great medieval doctors quite often when he finds them helpful, and in one place he seems to elevate some of the Reformers to a status not unlike that of the fathers. In his treatise \textit{De Ecclesia}, he describes Luther, Melanchthon and Calvin as “our doctors who blossomed in this age” (omnes doctores nostri qui hoc seculo florerunt). See Sibrandus Lubbertus, \textit{De Ecclesia, Libri Sex: Collati cum disputationibus Roberti Bellarmini} (Franekerae, Excudebat Aegidivs Radaevs, 1607), 421.
also far more compatible with the various proofs within the Bible pointing to the perfection of the Scriptures which God has given.\textsuperscript{116}

Having responded at length to Bellarmine’s arguments for the authority of tradition as a separate source of doctrine, Lubbertus concludes this section with a final summary of his argument where he relates the ambiguities and contradictions of Catholic tradition to what must be true of a \textit{principium} for Christian doctrine. He writes, “\textit{[Principia]} must be certain, outside all controversy, undoubted, true, and divine.” Since it is only the canonical books of Scripture—not tradition—which meets this requirement, Lubbertus is satisfied that he has shown clearly that Bellarmine’s assertions about the authority of tradition must be rejected.\textsuperscript{117}

\textbf{Lubbertus on the Ministry of God’s Word in the Church}

As we have surveyed Sibrandus Lubbertus’ writings on prolegomena (the most important being his \textit{De Principiis}) we have seen a consistent Protestant view of canonical Scripture’s final authority in the church which is set in stark contrast to the views of Robert Bellarmine in his \textit{Controversies}. While we will not consider Lubbertus’ entire doctrine of the church quite yet,\textsuperscript{118} it is important to point out that his prolegomena includes many references to ecclesiology since Scripture is given by God to be received, interpreted, illuminated and proclaimed by the church, especially through her officers like ministers and teachers. Therefore, having considered the character and interpretation of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[116] \textit{De Principiis}, 628-633.
\item[117] \textit{De Principiis}, 773.
\item[118] See chapter 4 which concerns Lubbertus’ ecclesiology.
\end{footnotes}
the Scriptures, Lubbertus’ prolegomena points us in the direction of ecclesiology and pastoral theology.

God’s word is given to us to be proclaimed in the church. Faithfulness in that work includes ministering the Law of God as well as the Gospel of salvation through the Savior.\textsuperscript{119} By that proclamation God’s calling of his elect has a two-fold character (\textit{Duplex est vocatio}, he writes) as the Holy Spirit produces the internal call through the means of the external call when the Gospel is preached.\textsuperscript{120} Therefore it seems important to close this section on Lubbertus’ prolegomena with the observation that there is not a clear picture of his view of scripture as the source of doctrine until it has been unpacked in light of his understanding of the church, the one institution in this world which has been entrusted with these Scriptures and the responsibility to make them known through her ministry.

The connection between the doctrine of prolegomena and church life can be made with one particularly provocative example. Within Lubbertus’ critique of Bellarmine on the authority of the pope’s doctrinal statements and scriptural interpretations in book six of \textit{De Principiis}, he spells out what the Protestant alternative is to having a single church leader (the pope) who is able to speak infallibly on such matters. Far from saying that every minister or every believer is able to interpret the obscure aspects of the Bible with equal insight and equal authority, he actually brings up the matter of church councils in order to show that God has given a mechanism for the interpretation of even very difficult parts of Scripture. When there is a truly catholic church council composed of

\textsuperscript{119} \textit{De Principiis}, 366; and \textit{Commentarius}, 36.

\textsuperscript{120} \textit{Commentarius}, 425-426.
orthodox ministers and elders who place themselves under the authority of Scripture in order to speak to matters of Christian doctrine, he says, it is there that Scripture’s most difficult challenges are going to be most faithfully handled. Therefore, Lubbertus has a rather high view of the church’s authority as a body which occasionally makes pronouncements on doctrine precisely because of his high view of the Scriptures which the church is to believe and proclaim. In fact, he takes this opportunity at this point in *De Principiis* to argue for the necessity of a new church council in his own day— one which would probably be held in Germany to deal with the fundamental differences between Catholics and Protestants, and one where those Protestants could finally get a fair hearing over such important matters of doctrine.\(^{121}\) In essence, he gives a quick foreshadow of what he would write exactly ten years later in the form of a polemical response to Bellarmine on the matter of church councils.\(^{122}\)

The close relationship between prolegomena and ecclesiology works both as a practical matter and as a polemical emphasis. Practically considered, Lubbertus explains how these Protestant emphases emerge out of the historical and contemporary experience of those in the Christian church. The polemical value goes a bit further, though, because Lubbertus is able to essentially dismiss some of the most powerful rhetoric which the Catholics used in the Counter-Reformation to discredit Protestants—namely, the fact that they were now functioning outside the bounds of the Catholic church. Lubbertus, of course, has a very different view of what “catholicity” means—it is something which the Bible defines, not something which defines the Bible. By bringing these ecclesiastical

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\(^{121}\) *De Principiis*, 479-480.

\(^{122}\) Sibbrandus Lubbertus, *De conciliis libri quinque: scholastice & theologice collati cum disputationibus Roberti Bellarmini* (Genevae: Samuelem Crispinum, 1601).
assumptions into his discussion of prolegomena, he makes an effort to defuse some of the rhetorical effect of Bellarmine’s position while he articulates a very high view of Scripture’s authority in keeping with all of the Protestant theologians who had been pressing this point for the past several generations. We will see more about his polemical effort to reclaim the church in the following chapter.

Post-Reformation Prolegomena after Lubbertus

It is not easy to discern clear lines of influence which Sibrandus Lubbertus had on his contemporaries and on those who wrote on prolegomena in the following several generations after him. Simply by being one of the first to offer a polemical refutation of Bellarmine on the issues of prolegomena, he was paving the way for the polemical works which would follow him in addressing such topics. Yet in light of how the fuller dogmatic works of the seventeenth century tended to use more polemical material in the course of dogmatic formulation and other theologians developed complete systems of dogmatics based entirely on polemical matters, it is tempting to generalize about a significant impact which Lubbertus had among Protestant dogmaticians—even those who were not simply known as polemicists.

One post-Reformation theologian who likely benefitted from Lubbertus’ De Principiis in his subsequent treatises was Johannes Raynoldus (John Rainolds) of Oxford who maintained epistolary correspondence with Lubbertus and in 1603 wrote his Sex theses de sacra Scriptura & Ecclesia.123 In this book, also based on classroom lectures,

123 Hanau: Guilielmus Antonius, 1603. Concerning the contact between Lubbertus and Raynoldus, see C. van der Woude, Sibrandus Lubbertus, leven en werken: in het bijzonder naar zijn correspondentie (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1963), 101-103, 119.
he also shows a close relationship between Protestant prolegomena and ecclesiology, and he also takes aim at the errors of Roman Catholicism though his book is not organized as a point-by-point refutation of Bellarmine as Lubbertus had modeled.\textsuperscript{124} As with Lubbertus’ \textit{De Principiis} this polemical context gives expression to a positive and constructive form of doctrine—in this case, a prolegomena and ecclesiology with a mature tone which comfortably switches back and forth between biblical exegesis and the most respected of the church fathers.\textsuperscript{125} Not surprisingly, there are many echoes of Lubbertus’ \textit{De Principiis} in Raynoldus’ treatise which appeared some twelve years later.

Another important theologian in the early seventeenth century who wrote on prolegomena after having read Lubbertus was Conrad Vorstius, who wrote his \textit{Enchiridion} in 1610.\textsuperscript{126} Vorstius was clearly acquainted with Lubbertus, the two of them having recently exchanged some heated treatises in refutation of one another. In his \textit{Enchiridion}, Vorstius covers some of the same ground as Lubbertus, such as giving a polemical response to Bellarmine on Scripture and Tradition, on church councils, and on the notes of the church.\textsuperscript{127}

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\textsuperscript{124} His book is structure around the defense of six theses: (1) “Sacred scripture teaches the church whatever is necessary for salvation,” (2) “The church militant is able to err both in morals and doctrine.” (3) “The authority of scripture is greater than [that of] the church.” (4) “The holy catholic church which we believe is the union of all the elect.” (5) “The Roman church is neither Catholic nor sanely a member of [that which is] catholic.” (6) “The Reformed church in England, Scotland, France, Germany and the rest of kingdoms and republics is lawfully separated from Rome.” \textit{Sex theses de sacra Scriptura & Ecclesia}, A4 verso.
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\textsuperscript{125} See, for example, his defense of the first thesis which holds that scripture teaches all which is necessary for salvation. \textit{Sex theses de sacra Scriptura & Ecclesia}, 55-69.
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\textsuperscript{127} Vorstius, 377-381, 390-393, and 393-396.
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R. D. Preus’ *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism* surveys the growth of works on prolegomena in the Lutheran camp at the time and soon after the time when Lubbertus wrote *De Principiis*. Some of the works from this period were expansions on topics of Scripture and theological method which grew out of polemical considerations (see Martin Chemnitz) or pastoral use (see Matthias Hafenreffer).\(^{128}\) By the time of Johann Gerhard and his *Loci Theologici* (1610-1622) and his *Methodus Studii Theologici* (1620), Lutheran prolegomena had developed considerably due in part to more interaction with the Reformed scholastics of the period.\(^{129}\) Again, the connection between such Lutheran writers and Lubbertus may not be direct, but Lubbertus’ use of the polemical genre to refute Bellarmine and develop the subjects of prolegomena had an influence on how the great Reformed and Lutheran dogmaticians of the seventeenth century approached their own presentations.

In conclusion, Sibrandus Lubbertus’ *De Principiis* and the various sections of his other major treatises which addressed prolegomena were very careful to offer a thorough critique of Robert Bellarmine and the Counter-Reformation theology affirmed by the Council of Trent. Lubbertus’ significance is not always found in the position which he takes in his writings on the doctrine of Scripture and the rules of biblical interpretation--most of the time he follows the well-worn paths of earlier Protestants before him. Often his importance is instead seen in the way he uses the tools of scholasticism and polemical refutation in order to defend Protestant and Reformed doctrine with attention to nuance,

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\(^{128}\) On Hafenreffer, see Preus, 108.

\(^{129}\) See Preus on Gerhard’s view of the nature of theology and his debt to several Reformed dogmaticians. Preus, 110-114.
rhetorical concerns, the relationship between Scripture the most respected ancient and modern interpreters of Scripture (i.e., the fathers), and the pastoral theology of ministering God’s word in the church. We have given a close examination to De Principiis in order to understand Lubbertus’ own views of doctrine and also—perhaps more importantly—to illustrate by way of example how prolegomena was handled during the high tide of Protestant-Catholic polemics at the end of the sixteenth century.
CHAPTER 4: THE ECCLESIOLOGY OF SIBRANDUS LUBBERTUS

Lubbertus and Ecclesiology

There is a great deal of texture to post-Reformation ecclesiology which has not been given the attention it is due in historical scholarship. Sibrandus Lubbertus is only one of the many major Protestant theologians who were writing on the doctrine of the church long after the first generation reformers justified and led (some would say first led and then tried to justify!) a departure from the Roman Catholic fold. If anything, the decades following the beginning of the Reformation saw more and more attention to ecclesiology rather than indifference and boredom since it was seen to relate to so many critical areas of Christian doctrine.¹ Moreover, if Lubbertus was born long after this first cataclysmic event in Protestant ecclesiology when a distinct Protestant church formed outside of Roman Catholicism, he also died long before the second cataclysmic event in the Protestant doctrine of the church which called into question the whole process of confessionalization among Protestants—namely, the ecumenical movement.² This leaves

¹ Among the literature on Reformation era ecclesiology, see David C. Steinmetz, “Luther and Calvin on Church and Tradition,” *Michigan Germanic Studies* 10, no. 1-2 (1984): 98-111. In this one piece, Steinmetz describes how two theologians at the foundation of the Lutheran and Reformed traditions showed a great deal of continuity on issues like scripture and tradition, the unity of the church, and the validity of church counsels in every age of church history.

² Depending on how it is defined, the ecumenical movement safely dates back no earlier than the eighteenth or nineteenth century, therefore it would not have been an expression of Christian theology or ecclesiology which Lubbertus would have encountered or embraced given the sensibilities of the post-Reformation era through the seventeenth century.
Lubbertus not only in the time of confessionalization and orthodoxy but close to the high water mark of entrenched ecclesiology when Protestants and Catholics held diametrically opposed ideas about the church. Therefore, while it is quite easy to open up virtually any significant dogmatic system of the post-Reformation period to find that post-Reformation Protestant theologians had a confessionally consistent doctrine of the church, it is all too rare that historians today ever seriously consider the important nuances in those ecclesiological formulations during this era of settled convictions on the nature of the church, its attributes and outward marks.

Having said this in general about the post-Reformation time period, we can apply this to the particular theologian with whom we are concerned in this study. Sibrandus Lubbertus never aspired to articulate a completely original doctrine of the church, but he is nevertheless an important theologian to consider on matters of ecclesiology because of the polemical environment in which he lived and the development of theological polemics as a distinct genre for doctrinal development among the Protestant scholastics (and, we might add, among the Roman Catholic apologists as well). In terms of the environment, one can make a strong case that ecclesiology was never more important than in the years immediately following the Council of Trent. For example, Tadataka Maruyama writes,

In the second half of the sixteenth century, the Catholic-Protestant polemics had retained their old vigor. More and more, ecclesiology had become the central issue in this polemical arena. In the post-Tridentine era, particularly, the visible, institutional aspect of the church was the primary concern of both camps.  

3 The following chapter on church councils may suggest that, even with such entrenched views on both sides, they were still able to imagine a path forward in healing the Catholic-Protestant split, albeit an unlikely one given the atmosphere of post-Reformation post-Tridentine Christianity in Europe.

4 The Ecclesiology of Theodore Beza (Geneve: Droz, 1978), 159.
As Maruyama notes, the decades which had passed since Martin Luther posted his Ninety-Five Theses and then later burned the papal bull actually saw increased concern in the topic of the doctrine of the church, and among both Catholics and Protestants there was a frantic effort following Trent to defend one’s own positions on this topic while discrediting one’s theological opponents. Lubbertus then illustrates how the tense environment of post-Tridentine antagonism required the development of a new genre of theological treatises, such as the long published refutations which Lubbertus wrote as painstakingly detailed responses to Robert Bellarmine, the greatest of the Counter-Reformation apologists in the late sixteenth century. In the polemical exchanges over ecclesiology, many of the fundamental assertions and distinctions in Protestant ecclesiology remained the same, but a battle was waged over such matters as the meaning of terms, the rightful heirs of those terms, the support found among the church fathers for various views, the logic of the other side’s arguments, and more careful or clever appeals to scriptural support.

Lubbertus’ polemical approach to the doctrine of the church reflects several important nuances to Reformed ecclesiology in the Early Orthodox period. First and foremost, Lubbertus sets out to establish the scriptural and patristic support for Protestant ecclesiology against the backdrop of Bellarmine’s *Controversies* and the challenge it posed for the Protestants. Secondly, he labors to define the terms of ecclesiology (e.g., “church,” “catholic,” “visible,” etc.) in order to clarify the doctrine and refute Roman Catholicism. Finally, he has the particular objective of disproving the marks of the true church offered by Bellarmine—who lists a total of fifteen notes of the true church in his *Controversies*—so as to protect the traditional Protestant view that it is the faithful
ministry of God’s word and the proper administration of the sacraments which are the essential outward marks of the true Christian church rather than those set forth by Bellarmine.\footnote{Bellarmine gives the fifteen notes of the true church in Disputationes, IV, c. 4-18.} These are not the only things which Lubbertus addresses in his lengthy treatises on ecclesiology, but these several considerations summarize both his polemical method and his doctrinal conclusions on the topic of ecclesiology.

If there is one foundational treatise on ecclesiology in Sibrandus Lubbertus’ works, it is his 1607 publication of De Ecclesia, Libri Sex: Collati cum disputationibus Roberti Bellarmini.\footnote{Franekeræ, Excudebat Aegidivs Radaevs, 1607.} However, he wrote several other major treatises which are also directly relevant to ecclesiology, including: De Papa Romano, libri decem: scholastice & theologice collati cum disputationibus Roberti Bellarmini (1594);\footnote{Academia Franekerana: Aegidivm Radaevm, 1594. Lubbertus dedicates the book to the States of Friesland, who established the academy at Franeker the previous decade in order to withstand the threat of Romanism in the region.} an early form of government for the province of Groningen which he composed along with Menso Alting and entitled Christlicke und schriftmetige kercken ordenung (1595);\footnote{Franeker: Gillis vanden Rade, 1595.} his treatise on church councils called De Concilliis libri quinque: scholastice & theologice collati cum disputationibus Roberti Bellarmini (1601),\footnote{Genevae: Samuelem Crispinum, 1601.} a 1609 refutation of the Roman Catholic polemicist Jacob Gretzerius who had defended the Roman papacy after De Papa Romano appeared,\footnote{De Papa Romano: Replicatio ad defensionem tertiae controversiae Roberti Bellarmini scriptam a Jacobo Gretzero (Franekeræ: Radaeus, 1609). Cf. van der Woude, Sibrandus Lubbertus, 118-121.} and the relevant portions of his Commentarius on the Heidelberg Catechism.
For the sake of clarity in presentation, we will wait to consider the issue of church councils until the following chapter, but this chapter will deal primarily with *De Ecclesia* with limited attention given to Lubbertus’ other works where they are relevant to his doctrine of the church.

**Secondary Literature Concerning Reformation Era Ecclesiology**

The scholarship on post-Reformation ecclesiology is, perhaps for some of the reasons described above, very thin. There is nothing written on Lubbertus’ doctrine of the church besides the relevant portions of van der Woude’s biographical study which tend to put them into the narrative of his life rather than into the context of on-going doctrinal formulation in the post-Reformation period. While there are some works which focus on other significant post-Reformation figures and their contributions to ecclesiology, these writings do not always particularly illuminate the milieu in which Lubbertus wrote.

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11 *Commentarius in catechesin palatino-belgicam* (Franicae: Joannes Lamrinck, 1618). In addition to these writings which deal with ecclesiology directly, Lubbertus also wrote works which were limited in focus to one particular occasion such as the controversies with Conrad Vorstius and Hugo Grotius. Both of these concerned the role of the church in academy and society and perhaps indirectly addressed issues of the doctrine of the church. There are also numerous examples of personal correspondence and theses for public disputation which address ecclesiology. Therefore, a concern with the doctrine of the church was one of the perennial themes of Lubbertus’ career and his writings. Out of necessity, we will only focus on his major published treatises on ecclesiology in this study. Cf. Lubbertus, *Declarationem responsionis & apologiae Conr. Vorstii pro ecclesiis orthodoxies* (Franeker; 1611); idem, *Responsio ad pietatem Hugonis Grottii* (Franeker; Rombertus Doyema, 1614); C. van der Woude, *Sibranus Lubbertus*, 80-110 and 198-308; and Ferenc Postma, ed., *Disputationes exercitii gratia / een inventarisatie van disputaties verdedigd onder Sibrandus Lubbertus, prof. theol. te Franeker, 1585-1625* (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1985).

For example, one of the few extant monographs on post-Reformation Reformed ecclesiology at the end of the sixteen century is Christiaan de Jonge’s *De Irenische Ecclesiologie van Franciscus Junius (1545-1602).*\(^{13}\) While Junius himself, an orthodox Reformed theologian formerly from Heidelberg who was writing in the polemical context after Robert Bellarmine’s *Controversies*, had a lot in common with his long-time friend Lubbertus, in de Jonge’s hands his doctrine of the church is given over to extraordinarily negative criticism for its purported “Aristotelian” and “philosophical” elements which de Jonge sees as a departure from a true “Calvinistic” understanding of the church.\(^ {14}\) He also misunderstands the purpose of Junius’ polemics when he tries to force them into his own modern conception “irenicism” which he finds so clearly modeled by the supposedly peace-loving Junius.\(^ {15}\) In the end, this study of Junius’ ecclesiology is more concerned with de Jonge’s own notion of irenicism and his own poorly veiled ecumenical ideals, and, while he chooses an important topic, his work offers very little insight into the contours of ecclesiology which a theologian like Junius or even any of his contemporaries intended to expound in his own context.

In another problematic essay touching on ecclesiology, F. G. M. Broeyer seeks to explain William Whitaker’s polemics on prolegomena and ecclesiology as an expression

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\(^{13}\) Christiaan de Jonge, *De Irenische Ecclesiologie van Franciscus Junius (1545-1602)* (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1980).

\(^{14}\) De Jonge, 78, 139-140, 143, and 181. In particular, de Jonge does not like the visible/invisible distinction which he finds in Junius and would have found in most other Protestants of that time. The best presentation of Junius’ thought is found in the third chapter of the book. Cf. De Jonge, 69-88.

\(^{15}\) De Jonge, 145-159. For a more positive assessment of the theology in Junius’ polemical ecclesiology written in response to Bellarmine, see Friedrich Wilhelm Cuno, *Franciscus Junius der Ältere: Professor der Theologie und Pastor (1545-1602)* (Amsterdam: Scheffer, 1891), 195-205.
of late sixteenth century Reformed scholasticism. However, as with de Jonge, Broeyer shows his hand when he focuses on what he sees as the inherent deficiencies in polemics rather than viewing polemics as a particular genre for scholastic theologians to use for scriptural interpretation, theological development, and the practical needs of church life in the late sixteenth century. As with de Jonge, Broeyer should be commended for his fine choice of a subject and he does get into the primary sources to reveal important debates, but his methodology and personal biases seem to prevent him from accessing the significance of the topic given his dislike of the polemical form.\textsuperscript{16}

Meanwhile, though, other publications have indeed offered insight into the shape of ecclesiology during the post-Reformation period. Irena Backus looks into the appropriation of Augustinian ecclesiology through the late medieval period and how the Protestant Reformation set off a lengthy effort by both Protestant and Catholic theologians to claim the Augustinian mantle or preserve Augustinian distinctions in ecclesiology for rhetorical and polemical purposes.\textsuperscript{17} While Backus approaches the issue with a very wide lens and does not offer detailed investigation into the individual post-Reformation theologians like Lubbertus or Junius or Whitaker, her conclusions are entirely consistent with Lubbertus’ polemical writings on ecclesiology as being a matter of scriptural doctrine supported by the great church fathers, especially Augustine.


In presenting the doctrine of the church for one particular post-Reformation thinker, Tadataka Maruyama’s *The Ecclesiology of Theodore Beza* is simply an excellent study, offering a fine summary of one part of Beza’s system of theology, some of which Maruyama finds in Beza’s writings of an anti-Catholic polemical genre. These works of Beza predate the later polemical context of Bellarmine and Lubbertus, but they show many similarities.\(^{18}\) Therefore Maruyama’s dissertation stands as one study in early Protestant ecclesiology which embraces the various genres of the time period in order to construct a faithful representation of one theologian’s views on the doctrine of the church.

**Protestant and Reformed Writings on Ecclesiology, *circa* 1520-1600**

The secondary literature concerning ecclesiology during the latter half of the sixteenth century may not reflect it, but ecclesiology was the controversy which never completely ended for early Protestants, and the large volume of sermons, commentaries, and dogmatic treatments which address the nature, attributes, marks, authority and structure of the church remain as a testimony to the importance of the subject. The earliest Protestant writings on the church by the first generation reformers tended to focus on the objectionable aspects of Roman Catholic soteriology and church polity as they were manifest in Catholic ecclesiology, especially in the Catholic articulation of justification through the infusion of grace in the sacraments as it related to the pope’s headship in the church.\(^{19}\) Later works, both Lutheran and Reformed, began to nuance the

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\(^{19}\) E.g., Luther’s *De captivitiae babylonica ecclesiae* (Wittembergae, 1520).
key doctrinal categories (e.g., invisible, marks, authority), preparing the way for both confessional formulation and the elaboration which took place throughout the Early Orthodox period. On the Lutheran side, one can trace development and nuance through the works of Luther, Melanchthon, Brenz, Flacius Illyricus and Chemnitz unto expression in the watershed confessional forms of the Augsburg Confession (1530) and the Formula of Concord (1577). Reformed works on the doctrine of the church by figures like Calvin, Bucer, Bullinger and Vermigli presented the doctrinal contours for the Genevan Catechism (1542/1545), Belgic Confession (1561), the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), and the Second Helvetic Confession (1566).

During the era of Protestant confessionalization, though, various scholastic theologians and apologists continued to elaborate on the doctrine of the church, often with an eye towards refuting the decrees of Trent or Bellarmine’s *Controversies*. Beza and Chemnitz fit in at this stage, as would Ursinus, Polanus, Whitaker, Junius, Perkins, Rainoldi, Lubbertus, Gomarus, Gerhardt, Ames, Voetius, Mastricht, Turretin and dozens of others. Therefore, even by just the end of the sixteenth century, there was a great deal of consideration for the proper terms of ecclesiology and the most effective means for establishing the scriptural and patristic foundations for a Protestant or Reformed

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21 Maruyama describes a generation of French Reformed apologists who were part of the backdrop to Theodore Beza, including Jean Morely, Antoine de la Roche-Chandieu, Bertrand de Loque and Philippe du Plessis-Mornay. Maruyama, 162.
doctrine of the church, and this careful attention to ecclesiology continued in dogmatic, apologetic, polemical, and pastoral works throughout the time of Early Orthodoxy (1565-1640) and High Orthodoxy (1640-1700).  

Bellarmine and Polemics on Ecclesiology

As it has been argued above in the second chapter, the publication of Robert Bellarmine’s Controversies was a watershed event for Reformed scholastic theology in that it gave a full systematic defense of the Catholic faith established by Trent; and this system now required a rebuttal from Protestants.  

Bellarmine's Controversies was a frontal attack on Protestant theology from one who had given very close study to the greatest theologians of both the Lutheran and Reformed traditions. In the Praefatio to his fourth volume of Controversies, Bellarmine shows that he had first hand acquaintance with Luther, Melanchthon, Flacius Illyricus, Chemnitz and others—all of them either anticipating the positions of Trent or directly responding to it (as in the case of Chemnitz). Therefore Bellarmine was working to oppose the writings of the early Protestant theologians as a truly “Counter-Reformation” apologist in all of his polemical writings, particularly in his treatment of the church in his Controversies.

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23 See chapter two of this dissertation concerning Bellarmine and the polemical response to him.

In this work, he gives a great deal of attention to the issue of the true church and her distinguishing marks because he wants the Catholic faithful to know with certainty that they have joined themselves to the only church within which salvation may be found. That true church, he writes, must be as plainly visible “as the assembly of the people of Rome, the kingdom of France, or the republic of the Venetians.”\(^\text{25}\) The fifteen visible marks of the true church, Bellarmine explains, are (1) the very name “Catholic Church,” (2) her antiquity, (3) her long duration, (4) the multitude of believers found in her midst, (5) the succession of her bishops from ancient times, (6) her agreement with the ancient church, (7) the unity of her members with their head, (8) the holiness of her doctrine, (9) the efficacy of her doctrine, (10) the holiness of the lives of the fathers, (11) the miracles in her midst, (12) the witness of prophecy, (13) the confessions of the Catholic Church’s adversaries, (14) the fate of those who oppose her, and (15) the temporal blessedness of her people.\(^\text{26}\)

While Lubbertus was a major polemicist who responded to Bellarmine’s doctrine of the church in the *Controversies* so carefully that he seems at times to be offering a rebuttal nearly line by line, he was not the only one writing on the doctrine of the church against Bellarmine and the *Controversies* at the close of the sixteenth century. William Whitaker, who was the first to publish a polemical response of any kind to the *Controversies*, also lectured on ecclesiology, and these lectures were collected and

\(^\text{25}\) Bellarmine, *Disputationes*, III.2.

\(^\text{26}\) Bellarmine, *Disputationes*, IV.4-18. For more on Bellarmine’s ecclesiology, see Thomas Dietrich, *Die Theologie der Kirche bei Robert Bellarmin (1542-1621)* (Paderborn: Bonifatius, 1999).
published shortly after his death as *Praelectiones de Ecclesia* with a view to rebutting Robert Bellarmine on behalf of the Protestant position.\(^{27}\)

Another clear example of the polemical genre is Franciscus Junius’s *De Ecclesia, libellus singularis*.\(^{28}\) Although it is considerably shorter than Lubbertus’ *De Ecclesia*, Junius’ work is also is structured around several aspects of the *Controversies*, challenging Bellarmine’s definitions and refuting each of the fifteen marks of the true church which the Jesuit polemicist gives.\(^{29}\) Rejecting the Roman Catholic definitions which describe the bond of the sacraments under the headship of the Roman papacy, he says that the church is the “coetus eorum quos Deus evocat e natura et modulo naturali ipsorum per gratiam in dignitatem filiorum Dei ad gloriam ipsius.”\(^{30}\) He then proceeds in good scholastic form to describe the essence of the church as to her four causes—her *efficient* cause (the triune God himself), her *material* cause (God’s word in Scripture), her *formal* cause (God in Christ), and her *final* cause (God’s glory).\(^{31}\) In the fifth chapter, Junius contrasts the church militant with the church triumphant, giving special attention to the means by which the elect are called and regenerated in their earthly life.\(^{32}\) When discussing the significance of the Greek name for the church (*ekklesia*), Junius explains

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\(^{27}\) William Whitaker, *Praelectiones* (Herborn, 1599). See Broeyer, 144-151.

\(^{28}\) Franciscus Junius, *De Ecclesia, libellus singularis* (Petrum Sanctandreanum, 1602).

\(^{29}\) His point by point refutation of Bellarmine’s fifteen notes of the true church is found in Junius, *De Ecclesia, libellus singularis*, 51-59.

\(^{30}\) Junius, *De Ecclesia, libellus singularis*, 3.

\(^{31}\) Junius, *De Ecclesia, libellus singularis*, 4-5.

\(^{32}\) Junius, *De Ecclesia, libellus singularis*, 14-19. We see here a close connection between post-Reformation era anti-Bellarmine ecclesiology and its connections to matters of prolegomena, just as Lubbertus illustrates in his treatises.
the meaning “those called out” in terms of the call, those called, and the one who does the calling.\textsuperscript{33} In the course of this discussion he continues to introduce theological distinctions used either by the Reformers and/or the scholastics. The final chapter is an extended refutation of the Catholic apologists with occasional reference to Bellarmine.\textsuperscript{34}

Among the late sixteenth century British Reformed polemicists was John Rainolds.\textsuperscript{35} He also wrote against the backdrop of the major Catholic apologists and polemicists like Stapleton and Bellarmine, and methodologically he resembles both Junius and Lubbertus with his disputational form which reacts to Catholic claims with arguments from scripture, the church fathers, and scholastic distinctions in doctrine. The scope of his major treatise on ecclesiology is also noteworthy because it entails “Holy Scripture and the Church,” showing that post-Reformation ecclesiology could not be easily separated from the issues of prolegomena.\textsuperscript{36} This is illustrated in Rainolds’ critique of Roman Catholic views of catholicity which he inserted under the heading “On Scripture” in the fifth and sixth theses.\textsuperscript{37} When he responds to the Catholic claim of the church’s infallibility in his second thesis, Rainolds of course denies this as a characteristic of the church militant, but the church triumphant has a completely different possession of the truth, he argues, thus deserving to be called infallible when no longer

\textsuperscript{33}Junius, \textit{De Ecclesia, libellus singularis}, 29-47.

\textsuperscript{34}Junius, \textit{De Ecclesia, libellus singularis}, 59-71.

\textsuperscript{35}Johannes Reynoldus, \textit{Sex theses de sacra Scriptura & Ecclesia} (Hanoviae: Guilielmum Antonium, 1603).

\textsuperscript{36}We made this point in the third chapter on Lubbertus’ doctrine of Scripture, we will make the connection again in this chapter on his ecclesiology, and it will be evident in the following chapter on councils as well.

\textsuperscript{37}Reynoldus, 123-199.
subject to the limitations and corruptions of this mortal life. As always, he substantiates these claims through Old Testament exegesis, New Testament exegesis and patristic support.

It was therefore the particular dynamics of the environment following the publication of Bellarmine’s Controversies which tied together the Reformed doctrines of the church’s catholicity and the authority of Holy Scripture through the scholastic development which is found in the polemical genre of such post-Reformation theologians. Bellarmine was not only the backdrop for these Protestant scholastic treatments of ecclesiology, but he was the occasion for a whole new genre of theological writings during the post-Reformation period as writers like Whitaker, Junius and Rainolds all developed positives systems of theology in the efforts to make a point by point response to Bellarmine, the greatest of the Counter-Reformation apologists.

Analysis of Lubbertus’ Writings on Ecclesiology

In treating the doctrine of the church through a refutation of Robert Bellarmine, Lubbertus has no single extant work which is exhaustive of the topic. (It might be remembered, however, that van der Woude finds archival correspondence suggesting that Lubbertus did work through much of his life to produce such single definitive response to Bellarmine on every locus of Christian doctrine—presumably including ecclesiology—and simply did not finish this manuscript or even manage to save what he'd compiled.) Therefore, as noted above, to understand his defense of a Protestant and biblically-

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38 Reynoldus, 69-93.

39 E.g., see Van der Woude, 101-102, and 124.
consistent doctrine of the church we are left with his various treatises, the most wide-ranging of which is his *De Ecclesia, Libri Sex: Collati cum disputationibus Roberti Bellarmini* (1607). The number of anti-Bellarmine treatises written by Lubbertus over the previous 16 years offer an expansion on various topics related to ecclesiology (especially on the papacy and church councils), and he did write polemical works and a full commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism in the following years, but the structure and emphases of *De Ecclesia* are most helpful in understanding Lubbertus' polemical expression of post-Reformation theology on the church. Indeed, there are places in *De Ecclesia* where Lubbertus merely refers the reader to his other treatises written years earlier on prolegomena, councils and the pope so as to spare himself and the reader a tedious rehearsal of what might be found elsewhere in his writings.\footnote{De Ecclesia, 141, 141, and 148, respectively.}

The range of concerns in *De Ecclesia* can be clearly related to the works of Bellarmine in his *Controversies*. Namely, Lubbertus covers the fourth and fifth of Bellarmine's addressed controversies apart from the topic of church councils as Lubbertus had covered that at great length already in his 1601 work, *De Conciliis*. The first book of *De Ecclesia* concerns the definition of the church, with special attention to the importance of recognizing both the particular congregation and the universal church in biblical doctrine. Book two addresses the question of who should be counted as members of the church. Book three is a defense of the visible/invisible church distinction which had been emphasized among Protestants back to Luther himself. The fourth book covers the two true notes of the true church (*notae Ecclesiae*) in contrast to Bellarmine's fifteen
notes. The fifth and sixth books cover various further points of ecclesiology in which Lubbertus gives refutation of Bellarmine and his list of marks of the true church.41

At one level, the structure of De Ecclesiae simply mirrors the arguments of Bellarmine. However, even following his opponent's general arrangement of the topic, it is essentially a comprehensive manual of ecclesiology, simply with a polemical interest in responding to Bellarmine. He shows as much conviction on the topic of the church as he shows in any of his major treatises. This is evident when he accuses Bellarmine of having a completely inadequate understanding of essential biblical aspects of a church—for example, that it includes children, that it is must have only the sacramental practices of her Lord's establishment, and that the papacy has no right to redefine the character of the church.42 His passion for the doctrine of the church is also clear in one particular word which he uses for biblical ecclesiology at one point—a principium. He suggests that, like other principia of the Christian faith, the doctrine which Bellarmine rejects merely speaks to the Jesuit's deep impiety which contradicts those things which are "certain and immutably true."43

In bringing De Ecclesia to light through publication, Lubbertus dedicates it to the council and senate of "the illustrious city of Emden" where he first began his pastoral labors, celebrating the city and its history of faithful church leaders for a tradition of solid

41 As such books were often bound together with other Protestant theological works, it is interesting that De Ecclesia was generally bound along with Franciscus Junius' refutation of the seventh controversy of Bellarmine, De Ecclesia, libellus singularis (Petrum Sanctandreanum, 1602). Van der Woude, 98-100.

42 For these critiques, see De Ecclesiae, 13-21.

43 De Ecclesia, 175.
Protestant orthodoxy even while serving as a place of shelter for many Protestant refugees over the years who had to flee persecution from Roman Catholic powers in northern Europe, bringing Emden fame throughout the world on both counts. In this way, this polemical genre on the topic of the church seems to find correspondence with Lubbertus’ earlier ministry in which he served as a pastor to those Protestant families who fled the persecutions threatened by the French Catholics and Spanish Catholics whose Counter-Reformation policies added brute force to the doctrines of Robert Bellarmine.

Part of the way in which Protestant theologians stood up against Roman Catholicism was through claiming ownership of the aspects to the early church which they felt were not only consistent with Protestant doctrine but indeed *more consistent* with their doctrine than with Roman Catholicism. For this reason, Lubbertus finds an entry point into ecclesiology with the brief expressions of the Apostles’ Creed which concern the doctrine of the church—“*I believe...in the holy, catholic church, the communion of saints...*” These words are therefore central to the early chapters of *De Ecclesia* as well as focal points in his later commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism which itself offers a catechetical explanation of the Apostles’ Creed. If a person understands the words of the Creed, Lubbertus suggests, they not only understand the essential articles of saving Christian faith but they also will understand why it is the *Protestants* (and not the *Catholics*) who articulate a Scriptural doctrine of faith which has

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44 *De Ecclesía*, 2 recto. See also the comments by Lubbertus’ main biographer to date, who suggests that Lubbertus may have been offering some gentle encouragement to his former colleagues Alting and Emmius given a rather turbulent few years in Emden’s *Grosse Kirche* just prior to 1607. Van der Woude, 105-106.
become enshrined for the ages in the Apostles' Creed, the earliest and most fundamental of the ancient Christian creeds.45

In the first chapter of the first book of De Ecclesia, Lubbertus starts with the very term "church" (ecclesia) which in its Greek form literally means "a gathering of those called out from others."46 But this raises an immediate question: "By whom, through whom, and to what end is such a personal called?"47 The answer to all three questions is God—in whom the call begins through his saving work in Christ to the end that they might be with him.48 Next Lubbertus relates this to the gathering of those called, which can be in respect to particular congregations in some part of the world (thus defined by place and time) or they can be understand as a universal totality of all those whom God gathers (thus without respect to time or place). He does this following the pattern of the Bible which will sometimes use the word "church" to speak more narrowly of a single gathering in one place and in other places it uses the word "church" to speak of all people called anywhere—the universal or catholic church.49 Following the three critical words of the Apostles' Creed a little more closely in his Commentarius on the Heidelberg

45 Lubbertus explains in his Commentarius that the Apostles' Creed is not only a summary of essential articles which must be believed by every Christian but it is the foremost of the ancient creeds, the remainder of which only amplify what is found in the early form of the Apostles' Creed. Drawing an analogy from the ancient Roman world, where soldiers carried a token to distinguish themselves from fugitives, foreigners and enemies who also traveled about in various places, Lubbertus calls the Creed "the Christian's token" (tesseram Christianorum) to identify them and set them apart from all heretics and other unfaithful people in the world. Commentarius, 210-211 and 205.

46 De Ecclesia, 1-2.

47 "A quo, per quem & in quem finem, convocetur?" De Ecclesia, 2-4.

48 De Ecclesia, 4.

49 De Ecclesia, 5-13. For more on Lubbertus' explanation of the church as particular at times and universal at other times, see Commentarius, 422.
Catechism, he further expands that "church" means those gathered together by Christ as the word of God is ministered, "holy" is descriptive because of the imputation of Christ's righteousness along with the inner transformation of the person (inclinatio) by sanctification and the consecration of separation from the world, and "catholic" implies that his church is spread across diverse places and times yet it draws from all humanity to a common doctrine of faith.  

The essential unity of the church is implied in the singularity of the expression "holy catholic church" in the Apostles' Creed, but it is made explicit in the slightly different wording of the Nicene Creed, "one holy, catholic, apostolic church." Lubbertus relates this unity to what is necessary given the church's catholicity in which it stretches throughout the world and throughout the ages since there is only one Christ (citing Eph. 1:23 and Rev. 21:10), there is one common Holy Spirit given for redemption (citing Eph. 2:21 and John 14:16 & 26), and there is only one adoption through faith to collectively become the spiritual sons of Abraham (citing Gal. 3:26). This exegetical explanation for the essential oneness of the church thus balances attention to the primary cause of the church (God in Christ), the secondary/instrumental cause (calling by Holy Spirit), and the final cause (the glory of spiritual adoption).

Relating this range of explanations of church unity in the Bible to the best of the church fathers, Lubbertus explains that this is why some fathers (including Bernard of Clairvaux and Clement) are prone to define the church as to her election while other emphasize the means of faith (e.g., Innocent)—these two sides are simply the difference

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50 *Commentarius*, 419.

51 *De Ecclesia*, 11-12.
between the primary cause and the instrumental cause in the classical Aristotelian sense. Later, when Lubbertus gets to the discussion about the visible and invisible church, even here he again returns to the idea of essential unity in the church since, though the church is at once both visible and invisible, there is only one church of which we can speak.

As stated above, Lubbertus explains the holiness of the church as the true righteousness worked out in members of the church through the grace of redemption in Christ, and yet he also at this point challenges the Roman Catholic explanation of Bellarmine who defines holiness in such a way that all those and only those in outward good standing with the papacy are holy while those lacking communion with the Roman bishop therefore lack holiness. For Lubbertus, the attachment to the papacy is not in any way the correct way to understand holiness, nor is attachment to any other visible church communion alone sufficient to bring holiness. As soon as he has given a clear biblical description of the holiness in Christ, Lubbertus then jumps to argue that the visible and sensible church in this world is always a mixture of good and bad through the presence of both the faithful and the unfaithful in her midst, as illustrated in the parable of the wheat and the tares and many other biblical passages. In fact, the doctrine of predestination itself makes this point since sanctification is only true for those called, and effectual calling is only for those predestined; therefore holiness is truly realized only in those predestined, and this is another way of saying that the church is mixed according to God's

52 See *De Ecclesia*, 11-12. A similar discussion of election in relation to the means of gathering through the external call and the internal work of the Spirit is found in *Commentarius*, 425-426.

53 “...[S]i externa vocatione censetur, externa visibilis; si interna vocatione censetur, interna & invisibilis dicitur.” *De Ecclesia*, 145.
own electing purpose.\textsuperscript{54} This pattern is true both of the church in its visible parts around the world as well as in the whole church as a universal body.\textsuperscript{55} Therefore, given the way the Roman Catholic theologians were inclined to obscure the meaning of holiness by attaching it to sacramental communion with Rome, for Protestants like Lubbertus it was necessary to properly define holiness and then make the case that in this world the visible church is always mixed with good and bad even though holiness is an essential attribute of the church precisely because the church refers to those called out of the world into communion with Christ.

Lubbertus explains the church as 'catholic' in the fourth chapter of book one in \textit{De Ecclesia}. He states that this term means the church is universal \textit{both with regard to place and to time}: "All those who, at one time, from all the earth in separate places are called together to communion with Christ are called the universal church...All those in different times, all the way from the beginning to the end of the whole world, before our age and after us, who are called and were called into communion with Christ are called the universal church."\textsuperscript{56} A little bit later, Lubbertus clarifies that this attribute of the church as being catholic is both a statement about God's election of his chosen people stretching throughout all of the places of the world and throughout time, but it also is suggestive of the means God uses to gather these elect by the Spirit's effectual calling through the external ministry of the church in all places and times. Therefore, God's election is the source of the church's catholicity or universal character, but this electing purpose is

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{De Ecclesia}, 97.

\textsuperscript{55} \textit{De Ecclesia}, 9-10: "Nam quod est in parte, hoc etiam in toto esse negari non potest."

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{De Ecclesia}, 6.
accomplished through means which are both internal and hidden (effectual calling) while also being external and visible in the Gospel ministry carried out by the church. The church is universal because wherever anyone is elect and called to communion with Christ they are called externally by the common doctrine shared by Christians around the world since only this is effectual to save.

Consequently, it is not only the church which is rightly called "catholic" but it is the doctrine faithfully used to gather God's elect into the church which is also properly called "catholic." With this in mind, he quotes Vincent's Against Heretics with great approval in his later commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism: "Quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est, hoc est vere Catholicum." By this point, Lubbertus has not particularly altered the standard approach to catholicity among Protestant theologians since the Reformation, but he has carefully used these standard Protestant explanations to counter the polemical arguments of Robert Bellarmine through biblical citation and careful appropriation of patristic formulations along the way. His summary of the matter of catholicity demonstrates this achievement quite well:

Therefore, I say that the Catholic Church of which the creed speaks is the communion of those whom God has from the beginning of the world until its end either by the great internal operations of his Spirit or by the external ministry of the Church and simultaneous internal operations of the Holy Spirit effectually called to the communion of his son.

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57 *De Ecclesia*, 10-11.

58 *Commentarius*, 209. Translated: "That which is believed everywhere, at all times, and by all—this is truly Catholic."

59 "Dico igitur Ecclesiam Catholicam, de qua symbolum loquitur, esse coetum eorum, quos Deus ab initio mundi, usque ad ejus finem, vel per internam Spiritus sui operationem tantum, vel per externum Ecclesiae ministerium et internam Spiritus Sancti operationem simul, ad filii sui communionem efficaciter vocat." *De Ecclesia*, 11.
Having offered this careful definition with so much context, he then immediately runs right to the classic patristic maxims to beloved by the Counter Reformation apologists to use them in a way which rather supports the Protestant position in rejection of the Roman Catholic view: "Extra Ecclesiam non est salus" and "Qui non habet matrem Ecclesiam, ille non habet Patrem Deum." The rhetorical value of claiming these patristic formulas for the Protestant side precisely for being more "catholic" than the Romanists cannot be overestimated since these precise quotations were inevitably used as the basis for the Counter-Reformation arguments for the primacy of the Roman Catholic Church. In Lubbertus' hands, though, these quotations help explain the connection between eternal election, the external ministry of the faithful [read "Evangelical" or "Protestant"] church, and the work of the Holy Spirit effectually calling the elect through the church. Salvation is not just the exclusive benefit of participation in the universal "invisible church," it is even rightly placed inside the communion of the universal "visible church" when each of these terms is properly defined.

Years later, when Lubbertus published his commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism, he emphasized many of these same basic essential characteristics of the church while relating them to the language of that early Reformed catechism. For example, as the catechism explains the article of the Apostles' Creed on the church by speaking of God's election of a people through the world and throughout all times, Lubbertus also speaks of the church as the gathering of the elect, citing support from such

60 The first quote from Cyprian of Carthage is translated "Outside the Church, there is no salvation." The second is a slightly altered form of the famous quotation from Augustine, translated to English as "He who has not the Church as mother has not God as his Father."

61 Lubbertus writes, "Quicunque extra hanc Ecclesiam est, servari nequirit." De Ecclesia, 11.
fathers as Jerome, Clement, the Venerable Bede, and Bernard of Clairvaux. He also explains in this context how the "communion of the saints" brings all members of the church to share in the gifts of Christ, their common Savior, as they are given to his people for their mutual benefit.

The comparison of Lubbertus in De Ecclesia and in the less polemical Commentarius also shows how membership in the church should be handled. All those who are elect and brought to communion with Christ by the effectual operations of the Holy Spirit are to be baptized as members of the church, but in the explanation of the Heidelberg Catechism he explains how the biblical pattern is for the children of believers to be counted as members of the church as well so that they too should share in the sign of baptism. This effectively distinguishes the effectual calling of the Spirit to faith in Christ from the sign of being grafted into Christ through baptism, but this is not any worry for Lubbertus since even with adults the Bible presents examples of those identified as being elect and being heirs of salvation either before baptism or at the end of life when they are unable to receive it.

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62 Commentarius, 423-424.

63 Commentarius, 428-434.

64 Commentarius, 527-528.

65 He points to Cornelius the centurion and the thief on the cross, respectively, as those granted salvation by faith in Christ even when they were not received into the visible church by baptism. Cf. De Ecclesia, 39.
The Visible Church and Invisible Church

To this point, we have made frequent reference to the distinction between the "visible church" and the "invisible church" in the ecclesiology of Lubbertus. However, as this distinction was mentioned before in respect to such things as predestination, catholicity, or holiness, it does deserve a separate discussion since it was such a bitterly contested issue between Catholic and Protestant theologians, particularly in the polemics of the post-Reformation period. In the Roman Catholic outlook, it does not make sense to speak of "an invisible church" since the only church they recognize is the one visible in the sacramental communion under the headship of the Roman papacy. Therefore Bellarmine and the other Roman Catholic apologists treated the concept of the church’s "invisibility" as a novel and false doctrine introduced into the world by the apostates and heretics such as the Protestant Reformers who were cut off from the Roman church and yet seeking to claim some place in the church.66 To the Catholic apologists and polemicists, the claim of a place in the invisible church was an absurdity if they were cut off from the Roman Catholic Church.

Protestant theologians and controversialists, undeterred by their Catholic opponents, not only insisted that they were members of the invisible church but also spoke with increasing conviction about their rightly deserved place in the visible church as well when the visible church is rightly defined in light of the scriptures. Indeed, Lubbertus has a full discussion of this topic of visibility and invisibility in book three of

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66 For example, Bellarmine contrasts the invisible church with the true church (which is, of course, visible). Lubbertus thinks that Bellarmine has jumped to a certain conclusion before proving it since he counters that "invisible" and "true" are not opposites. De Ecclesia, 146.
his *De Ecclesia* since it is so central to his dismantling of Bellarmine’s system of doctrine in his *Controversies* through a point by point refutation.

Lubbertus begins his presentation on this topic clarifying that, no matter what view Bellarmine assigns to the Protestants, the only view which Protestants have ever defended is that the church is both visible and invisible and that the "visible church" and the "invisible church" are not two distinct churches each with its own property but one and the same church in two aspects.\textsuperscript{67}

This means that Lubbertus is of course very happy with the idea of the visible church since it is half of what he is defending as the biblically consistent view which is unsuccessfully refuted by Bellarmine. However, in explaining the character of the visible church, Lubbertus is not content to limit his examples of this visible church to the duration of church history, which seems to be the general emphasis of the Catholic apologists. Nor it is enough to begin with the time of the apostles and the New Testament church. Lubbertus so identifies the Old Testament people of God with the New Testament church that he builds his case for the visibility and invisibility of the church as much upon the Old Testament as upon the New Testament. When he asks the question "Is the church visible?," he begins with a vast survey of the Old Testament to establish visibility of the "church" over many different times and experiences in biblical history. He suggests that while the church was always visible, it was not always visible to the same degree or free from various corrupting influences such as hypocrites. In fact,

\textsuperscript{67} *De Ecclesia*, 145: "Sed nostri eam neque simpliciter visibilem, neq; simpliciter invisibilem esse dicunt, sed utrumque; [typographical misprint] de ea dici posse contendunt. Una enim & eadem Ecclesia, eaque; vera, si externa vocatione censetur, externa visibilis; si interna vocatione censetur, interna & invisibilis dicitur."
the narratives of the Bible present as many examples of unfaithfulness and hypocrisy as it presents examples of faithfulness, and this is confirmed in the apostles' inspired recollection of the Old Testament's unfaithful times and people. Bellarmine defends the idea of the visibility of the church because he ties it to the infallibility of the Roman Catholic Church, but Lubbertus makes it clear that the Bible does not present an infallible church in this world and this is why there are times when the visibility of the church is greatly diminished (as in the story of Elijah in 1 Kings 19). But when those who are called out of the world into communion with God through Christ are faithful and thus visibly distinguish themselves from the rest of the world by this faith, they are the church in visible form whether a large multitude or a small remnant.

The invisibility of the church is the recognition in Lubbertus' ecclesiology that, even as this gathering of the elect progresses in this world, there are spiritual realities of God's power which are behind everything and these are not observable to the human eye. To use a distinction which Lubbertus gives, elect people in their humanity are visible through their corporal existence, but neither God's election of an individual to salvation nor the Spirit's saving operations through grace are outwardly observable to us—they are only (and inherently!) invisible. As Lubbertus surveys the scriptures, he finds abundant evidence throughout that while human eyes will be constantly deceived about who is elect and the extent to which grace is at work in the lives of those who make up visible congregations of the church (where there will always be hypocrites), the word of God

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68 Lubbertus points to 1 Cor. 10:5. Cf. De Ecclesia, 147.

69 De Ecclesia, 168.

70 De Ecclesia, 10.
speaks to grace in God's people as an unseen reality which is thus rightly explained as composing an invisible church. In the twelfth chapter of Hebrews, the church is described as those whose names are written in heaven since her members are never entirely visible to the world. Therefore, Lubbertus explains why the church is rightly placed in the creed as an article of faith that one believes in a "holy, catholic church." Faith concerns "matters not seen" (Hebrews 11:1), and so also is the universal church not seen to the human eye so much as it is revealed as known to God and purchased by Christ and invisibly called and regenerated by the work of the Holy Spirit.\(^7\)

As a clever polemicist, Lubbertus particularly delights in finding this pattern in those favorite scriptural passages of the Roman Catholic theologians if he can show they actually give greater support to a Protestant outlook. For example, in Matthew 16:18, Christ tells Peter at Caesarea Philippi, "...you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church...," which was always the primary biblical argument from the Catholics for the primacy of Peter among the apostles as the first pope and head of the church. However, Lubbertus argues strongly that the rock has to do not with Peter as a person but his declaration of faith in Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God which Jesus himself says is not revealed by flesh and blood. Lubbertus says that the very \textit{foundation} of the church (i.e., Christ, through faith) is \textit{not visible}, and so therefore the church which is built upon that foundation must also be described as not simply visible but also invisible in keeping with her spiritual nature.\(^8\)

\(^7\) De Ecclesia, 153-154.

\(^8\) De Ecclesia, 147-148.
Lubbertus on Marks of the True Church

On earth, the church militant can and does err in keeping with her fallibility, but yet there is a true church which always remains and is evident through her external marks. In the fourth book of De Ecclesia, Lubbertus sets forth his view of how this true holy catholic church can be identified clearly and distinguished from the false church which does not have the essential characteristics he has expounded.

So which is the true church? The true church, according to Lubbertus, is the "Catholic" church—that is, the church outwardly faithful in doctrines and practices which are universally believed by their conformity to God's word. Writing about this to refute the false teaching of Robert Bellarmine, Lubbertus and his fellow Protestant "Catholics" defend this true and "Catholic" church in sharp contrast with the false church which he generally calls the "Papist Church" or the "Papist Churches" since the marks of this body are vastly different and thus unworthy of the name "Catholic." Therefore, even before we unpack the idea of the marks of the true church for Lubbertus, we notice that in this polemical context Lubbertus is unwilling to grant that his opponents like Bellarmine should be called "Catholics" at all. He does think they are properly called "Papists," but "Catholics" are those who correctly identify and join themselves to the true church, and he does not find this to be true of Bellarmine or his like-minded brethren in the Romanist camp.73 The only "Catholics" Lubbertus acknowledges are those like himself, sharing his Protestant doctrine and ecclesiology.

To be more specific, then, Lubbertus says that there are two marks of the Catholic (i.e., true) church—true preaching of God's word and proper administration of the

73 De Ecclesia, 199.
sacraments. While Bellarmine had defended in his *Controversies* there being fifteen marks of the true church which were all meant to point one to the Roman Catholic Church as being the true church, Lubbertus spends the better part of books five and six in *De Ecclesia* arguing against any of these as being the marks of the true church in comparison with the two marks to which the Protestant theologians pointed—faithful preaching and faithful use of the sacraments.

Above all, the sign of the true church is the presence of true doctrine. Lubbertus, of course, builds this argument upon scriptural support, and he finds it in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. He locates this mark as much in the teaching of Jesus recorded in the Gospels as it is also in the New Testament epistles. John's Apocalypse is especially useful to Lubbertus as he finds admonitions to churches which prided themselves for the wrong things while lacking biblical fidelity and thus earned for themselves condemnation by the Lord himself. After an assessment of the biblical witness, Lubbertus has plenty to say about the lessons from church history. In his refutation of Bellarmine's marks he traces out long controversies of essential doctrine (anthropology, Christology, etc.) which at times plagued the medieval church until they were settled in the time of the Reformation. With the coming of the Reformation, the

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74 *De Ecclesia*, 199. On this point, he is in substantive agreement with the Belgic Confession (1561), which lists the marks of the true church in Article 29 as being the pure preaching of the gospel, the correct administration of the sacraments, and the use of church discipline. Ursinus does not list the marks of the true church in his Heidelberg Catechism (1563), but in his lectures upon the catechism he lists the marks as the pure doctrine of law and gospel, the right administration of the sacraments, and the profession of obedience to this doctrine. See Zacharius Ursinus, *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, trans. Willard (2nd ed., Columbus, Ohio, 1852) [Reprint, Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, n. d.], 288. Lubbertus is essentially stating the same marks as Ursinus taught since Ursinus’ third mark is wrapped up in Lubbertus’ understanding of the first mark.

75 “Vera igitur Ecclesia a false per veritatem doctrine distinguitur.” *De Ecclesia*, 208.
agreement of the Protestant church as to true biblical doctrine—even across Lutheran and
Reformed lines!—was how the faithful Protestant church distinguished itself as the true
church even as it was receiving official condemnation by Rome.76

Lubbertus also explains how the proper administration of the sacraments
functions as a mark of the true catholic church as it is an extension of the true scriptural
teaching which rejects human traditions foreign to God's word. At a most basic level, the
doctrine that there are only two sacraments and that they are not made effectual through
the Roman priesthood but through the efficacy of the Holy Spirit's work define what true
doctrine and administration entail. He also gives the exegetical case for the spiritual
presence of Christ in the Supper as opposed to the bodily presence of Christ in the Roman
view of transubstantiation in this part of De Ecclesia since this is a clear contrast between
a right and biblical administration of the sacraments with one that is unbiblical and
improper (i.e., incompatible with this sign of the true church and thus a sign of being a
false church).

In the case of the sacraments, there is, beyond the doctrinal truth, also the
practical effect of distinguishing the fellowship of some merely professing believers from
others who are worthy to be counted among the body of Christ; this is also how the
proper administration of the sacraments is mark of the catholic church. As Lubbertus
demonstrates, the true church does not include those who should be excluded from the
visible church since they have no participation in Christ; nor does the true church exclude
those who should be rightly included in her midst since she does not improperly

76 De Ecclesia, 315-346.
excommunicate the faithful who should be within the sacramental fellowship of the Christian church.

While in consideration of the doctrine of transubstantiation the presence of the Aristotelian substance/accidents distinction is rejected, Lubbertus is not opposed to a legitimate use of the great philosopher's metaphysical tools in the service of other aspects of good Christian theology. For example, Lubbertus argues that the notes of the true church are the external and accidental signs of the true essence (or substance) of the church. Just as a tree's essence can be confidently known when there are accidental signs like leaves, sap, blossoms, and fruit, so are the marks of the church (i.e., right doctrine and proper administration of the sacraments) reliable external signs for the presence of the true church of God's own creation through the work of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.

But, there is also a further relationship between the marks of the true church and the substantial presence of the true church. The two marks which Lubbertus has given are also the cause of the church, and, as he points out, "to know something is to know its cause." It is by the continual ministry of biblically faithful doctrine and biblical use of the sacraments that the church is brought into existence through the work of the Holy Spirit working by these appointed means of grace. Therefore, in considering the

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77 Like all of his post-Reformation contemporaries, Lubbertus studied Aristotle and assumed his metaphysical distinctions to be useful for theology as well as other sciences.

78 De Ecclesia, 201-204.

79 De Ecclesia, 202.
church, he considers Aristotle's metaphysics to be a useful tool and a confirmation of Protestant Orthodoxy.

Post-Reformation polemics generally had both an offensive component (the right view) and a defensive component (a carefully reasoned critique with occasional scoffing respecting the opponent's view), and this is indeed true when it comes to this issue of the observable signs of the true church. In the course of Lubbertus' doctrine of the church and his articulation of the marks of the true church, he offers a great deal of biblical, historical, patristic, and logical refutation of the Roman Catholic position as well, taking aim at Bellarmine's *Disputationes* in particular since it offered a clear contrast from the Protestant doctrine of Lubbertus and others.80 While Bellarmine has fifteen marks of the church he expounds in his *Controversies*, many of them are overlapping in their content and are therefore dismissed together by one line of criticism. Others Lubbertus finds to be worthy of a distinct refutation.81

For example, a large number of Bellarmine's marks regard the claim for Rome to have the truth based upon such things as being called "catholic," having a venerable history, maintaining continuity with the ancient church, having such holy doctrine, and having such efficacy of doctrine. Bellarmine presents all of these as distinct proofs for the Roman church being the one and only true church, but in the hands of Lubbertus they

80 As noted above, Bellarmine lists fifteen visible marks of the true church: (1) the name "Catholic Church,” (2) her antiquity, (3) her long duration, (4) the multitude of believers found in her midst, (5) the succession of her bishops from ancient times, (6) her agreement with the ancient church, (7) the unity of her members with their head, (8) the holiness of her doctrine, (9) the efficacy of her doctrine, (10) the holiness of the lives of the fathers, (11) the miracles in her midst, (12) the witness of prophecy, (13) the confessions of the Catholic Church’s adversaries, (14) the fate of those who oppose her, and (15) the temporal blessedness of her people.

81 This refutation is found in *De Ecclesia*, 229ff.
all present a rather obvious critique applicable to all of these marks and thus repeatedly employed by the Franeker apologist—it is God's word in Scripture which is the expression of truth, and God's word is not compatible with any of these Romanist claims to sole possession of the truth when it is not in conformity with God's word. Therefore, Bellarmine's claims to historic doctrine or possessing the truth are easily handled through an argument that *faithfulness to God's word* is the mark of God's true church and Roman Catholicism—whatever historical continuities is does or doesn't have—is opposed to Scripture and thus can't be true. In the Roman Catholic doctrine of Trent's decrees and Bellarmine's *Disputationes* Lubbertus finds abundant examples of such unbiblical doctrine (especially in the area of soteriology), and so he contrasts such statements with passages of the Bible. Far more impressive, though, is the way Lubbertus easily surveys the history of Christian doctrine and Roman Catholic papal decrees to show where there is incompatibility even within this supposed unbroken continuity in orthodox teaching which Bellarmine claims to be found in Rome.

Yet, the most rhetorically powerful sections of Lubbertus in refuting Bellarmine's marks are where he presents Rome as making a clear departure from the most respected and most orthodox of the church fathers who are in closer agreement with the Protestants—a pattern Lubbertus attributes to the greater conformity to God's Word among the fathers than among the later expressions of Roman Catholicism. Therefore, similar claims to possessing the truth because of holding one truth over time are consistently opposed by evidence to the contrary from Scripture as well as from historical sources in which Lubbertus sees great discontinuity and departure from God's Word.
Concerning Bellarmine's marks of apostolic succession among bishops and the unity of all members of the Roman Catholic Church with her visible head, the pope, Lubbertus disagrees that the Scriptures warrant either of these characteristics as demonstrating that Rome is the true church. For example, he always insists that what doesn't apply to the believers of the old covenant cannot be a *sine qua non* of the true church since the church must include God's people in *both* old and new covenants. Therefore, even if there is an unbroken line of bishops to which Roman Catholicism can point, that is only limited in relevance to the new covenant church following the apostles and therefore it cannot be said to be a sign of the true church in all of redemptive history.\(^{82}\) A similar kind of logic is behind Lubbertus' assertion that connection to the papacy cannot be a mark of the true church since it wouldn't have any relevance for the church of the Old Testament.\(^{83}\) He further states that the faithfulness of such office holders is guarding the Gospel is more important than the office itself when lacking in adherence to true doctrine.

Two of Bellarmine's marks suggest that the outward success and well-being of the Roman Catholic communion—by the multitude of believers, the temporal felicity of her people—establish her as the true church. Lubbertus remarks that he doubts whether such "amplitude" is so clearly possessed by Rome, but, even if it were true, it would not be a mark of the true church since in God's word a mere remnant may be all which is visible of God's people, and yet they are the church.\(^{84}\) And as for the happiness of those in

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\(^{82}\) *De Ecclesia*, 289ff.

\(^{83}\) *De Ecclesia*, 347-348.

\(^{84}\) *De Ecclesia*, 282ff.
communion with Rome, Lubbertus points to the promise of Jesus made to his disciples that they would suffer hostility, persecution and trouble for their faithfulness (citing John 16:20 & 33, and 2 Timothy 3:12)—hardly supporting the claim that the felicity of those in the Roman fold establish proof that the Roman church is the true church. In fact, he observes, the current persecution of the Reformed by Catholic foreigners in his own day in various regions of the Netherlands would rather seem to confirm those outside of Rome as having the stronger claim to being the true church of Christian disciples.\footnote{De Ecclesia, 424-430.}

While Bellarmine claims (in rounding out the list of the fifteen marks of the true church) that miracles, prophecies fulfilled, and the demise of those who oppose Rome all serve as further marks that she alone is the true church, Lubbertus is doubtful that these have the biblical support or the objective clarity which would be necessary to serve as a mark for a true church.

**The Fallibility of the Church**

Related to the question of the true church is the fallibility of the church—can the church of Jesus Christ err in matters of faith or morals? Bellarmine defends the classic Roman Catholic position of the infallibility of the church militant as led by the papacy.\footnote{De Ecclesia, 175.} As indicated in the fifteen marks of the true church Bellarmine offers, this flows out of Rome's identity has having unbroken succession of bishops reaching back to the apostles thus preserving the sacred tradition and demonstrating how Jesus' words to Peter were realized that the church would be built on the papal office and the gates of hell would not
prevail. Lubbertus argues the contrary position in a number of his works, insisting that the church can err in faith as well as in morals both as a conviction of ecclesiology and as an explanation for how the Roman Catholic communion has failed to remain the true church and has now proven herself to be a false church.87

For Bellarmine, the main distinction in this question is between particular churches (Ecclesiam singularem) which can err and the catholic/universal church which cannot err in matters of faith and life. He points to the Apostle Paul's words in 1 Timothy 3:15 that the church in this broad and universal sense is "the pillar and foundation of the truth."88 Moreover, Bellarmine looks to John 16:13 for assurance of the church's infallibility since there Jesus says that the Holy Spirit will lead them "in all truth."

Lubbertus, in arguing for the church's fallibility, asserts that both the particular and universal expressions of the church militant are able to err and often do err, but it is the word of God alone which is infallible. The church only comes to share in this infallible character when once she becomes the church triumphant in glory, finally free of the sin and ignorance of this fallen world which prevent perfect conformity between Scripture and the church. With respect to the Apostle's words in the first epistle to Timothy, Lubbertus stresses that the church is not the source of truth but rather receives the truth in the form of the word of God. He explains, "Thus it is apparent that the church is not properly said to be the pillar of truth, but rather the truth is the pillar of the

87 The portion of De Ecclesiae in which Lubbertus treats this point through refutation of Bellarmine is the third book's (section's) chapters 8 and 9. De Ecclesia, 175-198.

88 De Ecclesia, 176.
Likewise, the passage cited from John 16 is applicable not as a promise that the church will never err but rather it confirms the Protestant view (contra Bellarmine) that the apostles alone—inspired by the Holy Spirit—would so be led in the truth as to reveal God's word in Scripture as infallible as to give the church an infallible guide in this way. But, the church which is built upon the witness of the apostles is a fallible church in her militant state, plagued by remaining ignorance and misunderstanding in matters of doctrine and by remaining sin in matters of morals just as all of her members are. Added to this are the corruptions due to the presence of the reprobate and hypocrites in the fellowship of the church. Lubbertus is able to cite many examples throughout church history in which the fallible character of the church is clearly evident in hindsight, further refuting Bellarmine's assertions of infallibility.

Relating Ecclesiology in Lubbertus to Larger Questions of Authority

From all that we have shown, there are a number of ways that authority is inherent in the Christian church, and Lubbertus emphasizes the ways this is established by God's word and confirmed through the wisdom of the church and her greatest teachers through the ages in quite a different way than Bellarmine and the Roman church would maintain.

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89 *De Ecclesia*, 178: "Unde apparat Ecclesiam proprie loquendo non esse columnam veritatis, sed veritatem esse columnam Ecclesiae." He also describes the word of God as being the "seed of the church" (*Ecclesiae semen*) as the source of her life. *De Ecclesia*, 177.

90 Lubbertus refers to the remaining ignorance of the believer in 1 Corinthians 13:9 and to the remaining sin in even the regenerate in Romans 7. *De Ecclesia*, 185, 184.

91 *De Ecclesia*, 185.

92 *De Ecclesia*, 185-186.
As shown above, Scripture has infallible authority over those in the church, and the church has a role in receiving that authority through the interpretation of the Bible, but it derives all authority from Scripture itself rather than from the church's declarations about Scripture. The subject of the doctrine of the church as a visible body in concrete character does not for Lubbertus and his Reformed system of doctrine take away from the infallibility of Scripture alone, but it does give more specific form to how that infallible word of God carries authority over God's kingdom because this same visible church is given the "keys of the kingdom" for the exercise of that authority in either granting the forgiveness of sins unto salvation or withholding such remission of sins and thus assigning people to condemnation instead. Therefore, the ultimate expression of spiritual authority is the way the church in her visible expression employs ordained ministers to use the keys of the kingdom to seal the promises of salvation or to give more solemn proclamation to the absence of such saving grace so that one is left to know that only the judgment of hell remains.

Lubbertus gives the fullest treatment to the topic of the keys of the kingdom not in any of his direct refutations of Bellarmine but in his *Commentarius* on the Heidelberg Catechism in which it is the subject of the questions and answers numbered 83-85 in the catechism at the end of the section concerning the sacraments. At this point in his

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93 See chapter 3 on the role of Scripture.

94 Heppe's citation of Leonhard Ryssen shows this same idea being parsed out later in the tradition: "The power of the Church concerning dogmas does not consist in the Church winning authority for the word or creating new dogmas of faith, or in interpreting Scripture...infallibly at her pleasure, or in being the supreme judge in controversies...but it consists (1) in the guarding and expounding of Scripture; (2) in the judging what the Church ought to do in the matter of doctrine and in the symbols and confessions which she is bound to construct." Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics Set Out and Illustrated from the Sources*, ed. Ernst Bizer, trans. G. T. Thomson (London: Allen & Unwin, 1950), 686-687.
commentary, he explains that the office of the keys of the kingdom is the power by which the Lord Jesus Christ rules over his church, opening heaven to penitent believers and closing it to the impenitent through the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments by those ministers to whom he has entrusted the keys. Summarizing how the keys function, he writes, "Sunt igitur duae partes harum clavium, videlicet praedicatio Euangeli, & disciplinae administratio, utraque enim coelum & clauditur & aperitur." Lubbertus therefore connects the authority of the keys to the role of offices in the church, but it is especially the ministerial office which exhibits the highest authority of the visible church because of the charge uniquely given to the minister to hold forth the Word of God in the place of Jesus Christ and to administer the sacraments to the people of God according to the response given to his preaching.

Lubbertus believes that the character of the visible church is always a mixture of the elect and the reprobate both at the local congregational level and for the universal church in her visible expression on earth. Consequently, there is never a perfect correspondence between those people sharing in the outward and visible communion of the church and those who are elect and secure in their eternal redemption. It is the presence or absence of faith and repentance which finally distinguishes the elect from

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95 *Commentarius*, 605-606. In this context, he relates the administration of the sacraments to the process of church discipline as an outworking of the keys of the kingdom.

96 *Commentarius*, 606. The emphasis on the two parts reminds us of those same two things which were listed as the marks of the true church—the preaching of true doctrine and the right use of the sacraments. For Lubbertus, the same things which form the church and distinguish the church protect the church and confirm God's grace to the church.

97 See how Lubbertus continues to explain the function of the keys through preaching in particular in his subsequent discussion in *Commentarius*, 605-613.

98 See, for example, *De Ecclesia*, 71-72.
those who are outside of God's grace, but this faith and repentance is hidden in some degree from the eyes of men even through the ministry of the keys is outward and visible and attached to a visible officer in the preacher of the Gospel. The keys of the kingdom, therefore, for all their authority put in the realm of the visible ministry of the church, do not ever reduce the promise of grace to one's outward standing with the church as either being within the sacramental fellowship of her ministry or outside of it. Clearly, there is a significant correlation since ministers of the gospel are given the keys of the kingdom to be used in their regular public ministries, but Lubbertus does not think that the use of the keys ever completely rids the church of hypocrites and reprobate in her midst.

In contrast, Bellarmine’s exposition of the keys of the kingdom can be rather neatly summarized as to one's sacramental participation in the visible church, and of course this is visible ministry of the Roman church in particular to which the Jesuit apologist refers. He polemicizes concerning the papal office which is given to Peter and his successors as the source of spiritual authority for the church, especially through the grace of the sacraments. Therefore, for Bellarmine and the Roman Catholic view established at Trent, salvation is the exclusive possession of those and only those who are in sacramental communion with the church over which the pope serves as head. After all, to be a part of the church, Bellarmine states to Lubbertus' great disapproval, is to put oneself under the authority of the pope.

Lubbertus has two main lines of refutation of this Roman system of spiritual authority in the administration of the keys of the kingdom. On the one hand, he attacks the basis of the papacy which underlies this system. On the other hand, he addresses the topic of those included or excluded in the sacramental communion of the Roman church,
giving special attention to the status of those excommunicated from the Roman Catholic communion.

Lubbertus gives a full refutation of the institution and theology of the papacy in his second major polemical book against Bellarmine, *De Papa Romano*. Given in response to the third portion of Bellarmine's *Controversies*, he handles such topics as church office in general, the headship of Christ, the role which was given to Peter, the lack of a "monarchy" for Peter and lack of succession for it, the papal appointment of bishops, the infallibility of the pope, the earthly powers of the pope, and the correspondence between the Roman papacy and the Antichrist. However, the central problem of the papacy to the Roman system of doctrine defended by Bellarmine receives some treatment in all of the anti-Bellarmine writings which Lubbertus produced, even when the main focus is on prolegomena, ecclesiology, or church councils. Lubbertus shows that there was no office of pope distinct from the office of apostle, and the apostle Peter is only described in the New Testament as an apostle who was not to be succeeded even in his apostolic office, much less in the papal office. Elsewhere, he argues that the early church and all of her early ecumenical councils are just as lacking any understanding of the office of pope as the generation of the apostles during the time of

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99 *De papa Romano, libri decem: scholastice & theologice collati cum disputationibus Roberti Bellarmini* (Academia Franekerana: Aegidivm Radaevm, 1594).

100 For a summary of Lubbertus' second book and its fruit, see van der Woude, 82-84.

101 *De Principiis*, 468-469. Also, since Bellarmine was inclined to see the precedent for Peter's monarchy in the unique monarchical office given to Moses over all of Israel, Lubbertus goes into a significant digression about monarchical roles of the OT such as that given to Moses are typological of the mediatorial role of Christ and not a standing office for leaders of the church such as it claimed for the pope. See *De Principiis*, 424-425 and 442-443.
the writing of the New Testament. Therefore, the whole system of government and authority for the Roman Catholic Church which looks to the office of the papacy is entirely misguided according to Lubbertus.

Therefore, if the Roman Catholic Church should use the keys of the kingdom to excommunicate a person from the church as an application of spiritual authority which cuts a person off from God's grace unto salvation, Lubbertus suggests this is a misrepresentation of church authority in several ways. It is a misrepresentation first in that it is not a person's communion with the church over which the pope leads which makes that person a member of the church or a partaker of the grace which is in Jesus Christ. Bellarmine's emphasis on the connection to the papal office is entirely lacking in biblical support, Lubbertus says. Moreover, since there is both a visible and an invisible reality to the church, those who are excommunicated from Rome may in Bellarmine's sense no longer be a part of the visible Roman Catholic Church under the pope's authority, but, if they are believers regenerated by the Holy Spirit and grafted into Christ, they are certainly still a part of the invisible church. Lubbertus was aware of many people were thus cast out of Rome but clearly still members of the invisible church over which Christ is the head. "We distinguish," Lubbertus says, "between those excommunicated in truth and those not excommunicated in truth." Even one excommunicated from the Roman church may be considered to be a member of the church—the invisible church, that is—if that person's communion with Christ and

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102 Sibrandus Lubbertus, *De Papa Romano: Replicatio ad defensionem tertiae controversiae Roberti Bellarmini scriptam a Jacobo Gretzero* (Franekeræ: Radaeus, 1609), 157-159.

103 *De Ecclesia*, 53.
partaking of his grace by faith is internal and spiritual rather than purely external according to the practice of Rome and the teaching of Robert Bellarmine.\textsuperscript{104} These Roman views look simply to the visible church under the papacy as the only place for one's participation in the church.\textsuperscript{105}

The impression which one receives from Lubbertus' treatment of authority is that the authority of the church is distinctively \textit{spiritual} in its character, and because it is distinctively spiritual it is altogether different from the power of the state. All of the authority of the church is brought to bear in the minister's handling of the word of God through the preaching of the Gospel to those who either receive it with faith unto salvation or reject it and fall under condemnation. Therefore, the civil magistrate does not have any part in the authority of the church, even though—as a practical matter—Lubbertus does think it is the obligation of the magistrate to guard the true church and true doctrine in whatever capacity the state is able to have a hand in guarding the Gospel ministry.\textsuperscript{106} In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, one would be hard pressed to find anyone who did not think the state had a role in the propagation of true

\textsuperscript{104} \textit{De Ecclesia}, 64. Lubbertus works to this conclusion after having made a rather long contrast between Bellarmine's views and the church fathers on the issue of whether those excommunicated should be considered as members of the church.

\textsuperscript{105} While this simple formula is what Bellarmine defends, Lubbertus exploits an apparent contradiction in Bellarmine regarding secret heretics (\textit{occultos infideles}) since they are both in the church by their sacramental inclusion and they are excluded from the church as an exceptional case which Bellarmine addresses. Lubbertus gives this as an example of a \textit{reductio ad absurdum} in Bellarmine (cf. \textit{De Ecclesia}, 133) which can be easily avoided through the simple distinction between the visible church (which includes heretics, of course) and the invisible church (which excludes them). \textit{De Ecclesia}, 145ff. Another strike against Bellarmine is that the same church fathers he cites elsewhere regarding ecclesiology (most notably, Origen and Augustine) line up behind Lubbertus' view with respect to those hypocrites being in the visible church though not truly sharing in grace. Cf. \textit{De Ecclesia}, 131.

\textsuperscript{106} See, for example, the introduction to Lubbertus' \textit{Commentarius}, 2(recto)-5.
doctrine for the sake of a true church, and so Lubbertus like everyone else assumes that there is a place for the civil magistrate in the establishment of the church.\textsuperscript{107} Yet, despite this practical concession to the role of the state, Lubbertus' ecclesiology certainly leans in a direction to distinguish this \textit{protective} role of the state from having any part in the \textit{spiritual authority} bestowed by Christ to the visible church and her officers to administer the keys of the kingdom through the proclamation of the word of God.

\textbf{Ecclesiology Following Lubbertus' Polemics against Bellarmine}

From the standpoint of the modern church, the polemical form (and occasionally combative tone) in Lubbertus' writings on ecclesiology has been judged quite severely at times—assigning low character to the man and little value to his writings.\textsuperscript{108} While it might be a rather subjective issue whether one likes Lubbertus' writings on ecclesiology, their significance surely must be considered in light of the impact he had on his immediate successors both writing post-Reformation theology and bringing it into the life of the church where it was well-received. In this respect, Lubbertus seems not only to reflect the ideas of his age but he seems to pave the way for continuing development of Reformed doctrine and anti-Roman polemics deep into the seventeenth century.

\textsuperscript{107} Heppe, for example, quotes J. H. Heidegger, a couple generations later than Lubbertus, making a similar claim for the civil magistrate's protective role: "The government of the church has been ecclesiastical in the past. It is civil, so far as the believing magistrate, armed with the sword, also cares for the Church along with the State and furthers and protects the pure worship of God, as the custodian of the two tables." Heppe, 691.

\textsuperscript{108} Lubbertus' biographer, van der Woude, is quite critical of Lubbertus and his anti-Bellarmine treatises on ecclesiology. Cf. van der Woude, 84-85.
The influence of the anti-Bellarmine writings on the church—like those by Sibrandus Lubbertus which we have considered in this chapter—are very clear in the writings of the remainder of the era of High Orthodoxy.

Franciscus Gomarus, a relative contemporary of Lubbertus as well as a personal friend, wrote a 1603 treatise on ecclesiology which is clearly emerging out of the immediate polemics against Bellarmine. His exegesis, his appeal to the fathers, his use of historical examples of Roman abuses, and his rhetoric in general present the same contours of ecclesiology flowing out of a deep commitment to the authority of God's Word which result in both a visible church of certain character as well as an invisible church of those who are God's elect come to share in grace through Jesus Christ. Like Lubbertus, Gomarus places the faithful ministry of the Word as far and away the most important visible sign of the true church, even suggesting how the true church will reflect faithful hermeneutics of distinguishing law and gospel in a way much like Lubbertus stated. In many ways, the influence of Lubbertus and the polemical response to the Counter-Reformation by his generation of Reformed dogmaticians is evident.

Similar influence is evident in the writings on ecclesiology by David Pareus, who pulls from the polemical exchanges of earlier decades sufficient contradictions in Roman Catholicism to arrive at more nuanced appraisals of how Protestants might agree on a more biblically consistent basis for understanding the breadth of the church.  

109 Cf Franciscus Gomarus, Speculum verae ecclesiae Christi: quo pontificiorum errores a Francisco Costero...confutantur (Hanoviae: Guilielmum Antonium, 1603), 16-30, 13-14, 25-26, and 11-16.

110 See David Pareus, Irenicum sive de Unione et Synodo Evangelicorum concilianda Liber Votivus, Paci Ecclesiae et desiderijs pacificorum dicatus (Heidelberg: Johannes Lancellotus, 1615), 217-219.
Conrad Vorstius shows indebtedness to Lubbertus and the early wave of responses to Bellarmine when he writes a later form of refutation for the great Jesuit apologist. There he commends these earlier works for his own readers who would desire to see the great errors of Tridentine Roman Catholicism and a unified Protestant stand for more biblical understanding of ecclesiology and the matter of church councils.  

A survey of the section on ecclesiology in Heppe's *Reformed Dogmatics* would bring one to similar conclusions that Lubbertus was not distinguished by his polemical interests on the church so much as he was distinguished by his early participation in a whole new age of polemical responses to Roman Catholicism. Lubbertus' exegesis, his citations of the fathers, and his presentation of logic and rhetoric were all informing the new standard forms for the character of Reformed theology into the seventeenth century with the high tide of post-Reformation orthodoxy.  

In conclusion, Lubbertus produced a doctrine of the church which sought to be thoroughly consistent with Scripture, thoroughly supported by the best of the Christian tradition reaching back to the church fathers and the early ecumenical creeds, and thoroughly adequate for the raging controversies with Rome in the generation following the Council of Trent and the publication of the *Disputationes* by Robert Bellarmine. It was certainly a defense of the early Reformers like Luther and Calvin, but it was also a retooling of this Protestant stand on the church for a new generation of controversy.  

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112 See, for example, Heppe, 660-661.
CHAPTER 5: SIBRANDUS LUBBERTUS ON CHURCH COUNCILS

Church Councils and Lubbertus

Since church authority straddles the customary dogmatic loci of prolegomena and ecclesiology, it is quite difficult to understand or analyze one of these aspects to church authority in the late sixteenth century or early seventeenth century in isolation from the other. Of course, in the post-Reformation era primary sources themselves, these two loci tend to bleed into one another—whether in theological treatises, scriptural exposition or the sermons of that day. Among Sibrandus Lubbertus and his Protestant and Catholic contemporaries, the issue of the sources of true doctrine (principia cognoscendi) was therefore invariably related to the identification of the true church and her character. Once the identity and character of the church is determined, then that church identifies, interprets and proclaims that true doctrine through the reception of the right sources.

The notion of church councils was therefore a topic of great interest during the sixteenth century. For theoretical and practical reasons, those on both sides of the Reformation’s divide understood church councils as the supreme expression of church authority, based on their respective convictions about the sources of true doctrine and the nature of the church.

For Roman Catholics, the church council—especially if it is an ecumenical council which is further approved by the papacy—is a clear and visible display of the unity of the one universal church and her perfect agreement in the doctrine and life
passed on to the church by the Lord Jesus Christ through the apostolic tradition. Practically speaking, the Roman Catholics of the sixteenth century in particular desired the clear judgment of a church council so that, like the ancient church councils of old, they might rebuke the errors of the Protestants as new forms of heresy departing from the Catholic Church. In other words, *theoretically* the church council represented the highest ideal of Catholic unity and *practically* it was the only hope for adequately exposing and removing the errors of the Protestant Reformation which continued to persist decades into the sixteenth century. This meant that the conciliar movement of the medieval church was given fresh momentum in the time of the Counter-Reformation to again push this issue although it was not so much to off-set the power of other quarters in the Catholic church (i.e., the power of the papacy, which was the medieval issue) as it was to consolidate such power across the church in producing a united voice against the Protestants during a time of upheaval.

Although it is not often recognized, the first Protestants also embraced the notion of church councils as the highest expression of church authority if it could be conducted according to Protestant convictions concerning the supreme authority of canonical Scripture and the characteristics of a faithful and true church guided by that Scripture. For this reason, the magisterial Reformers invariably recognized the triumphs of the ecumenical councils in the ancient church over early Christological heresies like Arianism or Eutychianism precisely because they saw these councils upholding the principle of *sola Scriptura* through the identification and refutation of heretical departures from the truth. In their own sixteenth century *milieu* they also held out hope that the doctrine embraced by the Protestant Reformation might be vindicated and
embraced over and against the errors of Roman Catholicism through such a general (or *ecumenical*) council as the one which was held centuries before in Nicea in the year 325.

This again brings us to Sibrandus Lubbertus, the professor of dogmatic theology at Friesland's Theological School (which soon became part of the larger university) in Franeker. Lubbertus wrote a treatise entirely upon the topic of church councils in order to show how the Reformed understanding of Scripture and the church both inform this issue. On the one hand, the publication of *De conciliis libri quinque: scholastice & theologicice collati cum disputationibus Roberti Bellarmini* (1601) was just the third installment of his long-term project of articulating a positive system of Christian doctrine through refuting the greatest of the Counter-Reformation apologists, Robert Bellarmine.\(^1\)

It was identical in its polemical form to his earlier treatises, *De Principiis* (1591) and *De Papa Romano* (1594), but now he simply examines another portion of Bellarmine’s *Controversies* which has the subtitle, “De Ecclesia Militante in conciliis congregata.” As it was argued above in this study, Lubbertus makes use of the polemical genre embraced by the post-Reformation scholastics in order to develop the Reformed system of doctrine in light of the significant threat posed by Bellarmine and the Counter-Reformation.

On the other hand, though, Lubbertus’ *De Conciliis* must be appreciated as not only a refutation of Bellarmine but as a serious proposal for an actual church council in his own time which would address the areas of fundamental disagreement between the Protestants and Catholics. In eighty years of controversy between the two sides, there was no shortage of evidence that both Protestants and Catholics had dug in their heels.

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and they would refuse to compromise on their doctrinal commitments. Along with the production of Protestant confessions like the *Augsburg Confession* and the *Belgic Confession* for the Protestant side of Lutherans and the Reformed, the Council of Trent’s canons and decrees at mid-century stand as a defining event for Catholics in the fracture of the western church into separate Catholic and Protestant communions.

Nevertheless, there were many Protestant theologians as late as the start of the seventeenth century who did not think the division with the Roman Catholics was insurmountable. This is not because the differences were easy to overcome, but rather because the historic practice of holding an ecumenical council was the one possibility for uniting the whole (western) Christian church in defense of historic apostolic truth over and against doctrinal errors and innovations. Many felt this form of ecumenical council was still a possibility as long as certain factors all worked together for such an event to take place. Robert Bellarmine and Sibrandus Lubbertus were well aware of the events which transpired at Trent a couple decades before they were writing, but they came to very different conclusions about what had happened there and how it should be received by the universal church. In each of their writings about church councils, they offer clear opinions about Trent either in support of it (Bellarmine) or in rejecting it for being improperly assembled and thus rendered irrelevant (Lubbertus).

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2 The hope of reunion was expressed in the colloquies of Leipzig (1631) and Thorn (1645) even if these gatherings did not accomplish all of their intended goals. Unfortunately, various historical studies have overlooked the possibilities for which the post-Reformation theologians still seemed to hope in their own day. One of the main historians to examine the polemical context between Roman Catholics and Protestants at the end of the sixteenth century has in fact called the division between Catholics and Protestants “insurmountable” (in Dutch, *onoverbrugbaar*). See F. G. M. Broeyer, “William Whitaker (1548-1595): Leven en Werk van een Anglocalvinistisch Theoloog” (Ph.D. diss., Utrecht Universiteit, 1982), 140.
Bellarmine was of course writing in support of Trent, and he took the declarations of that council as the occasion to refute the Protestants now that Rome had spoken on the matter. In addition, the reader of Bellarmine's *Controversies* will notice that he sought to justify not simply the doctrinal judgments but the occasion and the format of the Council of Trent as well in his treatment of ecclesiology and church councils. This is part of the reason why his treatment of church councils and their authority was such a lengthy section in his *Controversies*.

In contrast, Lubbertus wrote *De Conciliis* with several goals in mind. First, he wrote in order to refute Bellarmine’s *Controversies* on the subject of church councils, often addressing the Jesuit’s arguments point for point as he did on other topics in other polemical treatises. Secondly, he seeks to give a positive account of what a lawfully called church council meeting in submission to God’s word would look like. Finally, though, he certainly wants to make a broader case than just refuting the Jesuit Bellarmine. He also seeks to show that the Council of Trent which was held from 1545 to 1563 fell grievously short of being a lawfully called and scripturally governed church council. In effect, the condemnation of Protestant theology at Trent had only stoked the fires of Protestant interest in having a new church council, and Lubbertus’ *De Conciliis* was clear demonstration that this hope stayed alive at the dawn of the seventeenth century.

The final thesis to advance at this point is that Lubbertus was articulating a desire for a church council which had been voiced by Protestants many times during the course of the sixteenth century, and he was purposefully writing in continuity with those earlier proposals. While he had read many treatises on ecclesiology and church councils from numerous Protestant theologians, his ideas in *De Conciliis* bear the stamp of Luther’s
influence from his work *On the Councils and the Church*, and Lubbertus clearly appropriates this source along with the emphases of those second and third generation Reformed writers who sought unsuccessfully to put some of these principles into practice during the middle of the sixteenth century. Given the struggles which Lutherans and Reformed theologians had encountered in seeking to arrive at doctrinal agreement over the course of the sixteenth century concerning such things as sacraments, Christology and worship, there is a remarkable *pan-Protestant* spirit to Lubbertus’ treatment of church councils, which views the Lutherans as allies in the case due to many shared convictions and shared goals for the church. He renounces the errors of Robert Bellarmine in order to speak on behalf of the whole Protestant church for the doctrines they held in common and desired to vindicate in a truly ecumenical church council which might be held in conformity with the Scriptures as a repudiation of Trent and its decrees.

For a theologian who wrote almost exclusively in the polemical genre, Sibrandus Lubbertus was not actually very sectarian in composing *De Conciliis* since it presents him the opportunity to build on common ground with the Lutherans rather than to revive old debates which had always stood between them. His whole project of refuting Bellarmine and defending Reformed Orthodoxy allows him to show the extent to which all Protestants agreed on several things: the *principia* of true Christian doctrine, the characteristics of a true church which can lay claim to the apostolic tradition, and the process required for settling the most important doctrinal debates of the Reformation era—namely a post-Reformation ecumenical council. His vision for reaching this level

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of cooperation among Christians of different confessional identities by corralling the Lutherans and Reformed into a single council was never realized, but, among his extant anti-Bellarmine works, *De Conciliis* challenges some of the misconceptions about polemicists like Lubbertus in the time of Early Orthodoxy by showing that it was not entirely opposed to a kind of ecumenism.4

**Post-Reformation Secondary Literature on Councils**

Basil Hall argued in 1971 that the whole issue of colloquies and councils in the time of the Reformation was poorly understood and little appreciated given that over twenty years after the start of the Protestant Reformation there were still attempted reunions between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism.5 This generalization is just as true—perhaps even *more* true, if we can speak that way—for the post-Reformation era in which Lubbertus lived since many theological works are ignored and much of the historical context is forgotten in surveys of the period today. Scholarship therefore remains very thin when it comes to church councils in the post-Reformation period. Major writings on the topic (such as Lubbertus’ *De Conciliis*) are completely ignored except for how they appear in the superficial biographical sketches of post-Reformation theologians who may have addressed this issue in the course of their lives.6 Furthermore,

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4 Howard Hotson presents a similar argument with reference to David Pareus and Jan Amos Comenius in “Irenicism and Dogmatics in the Confessional Age: Pareus and Comenius in Heidelberg, 1614,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 46.3 (July 1995), 432-456.


6 In the case of Lubbertus, his major biographer merely mentions in passing the writing of his treatise on church councils. Cf. van der Woude, *Sibrandus Lubbertus*, 89-94.
the historical context of these Protestants is often described without attention to the
debate over how to hold a church council which the Protestants could support—a topic
which would seem to deserve at least mention in a historical survey.\footnote{E.g., notice the\ failure to address this issue in Philip Benedict, \textit{Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).}

The obvious background to Protestant debates over church councils and how to get a fair hearing is the late medieval “conciliar movement” which, even before the Reformation, was an attempt to limit the power of the papacy.\footnote{See Francis Oakley, \textit{The Conciliarist Tradition: Constitutionalism in the Catholic Church 1300-1870} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).} And yet there is much more scholarship which needs be done on this topic as a background to both the first generation of Protestants and those like Lubbertus who were still arguing about how to reform the practice of a Roman Catholic church council into the seventeenth century.\footnote{One exception to this general neglect is David C. Steinmetz’s “Luther and Calvin on Church and Tradition,” \textit{Michigan Germanic Studies} 10, no. 1-2 (1984): 101. He argues that Luther wrote his \textit{On Councils and the Church} during a time when he was reading widely from several conciliarist sources.} It is generally not clear how much the Protestants knew about this movement; nor is it understood how much this influenced Protestant-Catholic polemics throughout the sixteenth century.

Another issue of historical background is that long series of Protestant attempts at regional councils and local Protestant-Catholic dialogues during the early and middle decades of the sixteenth century which give some shape to the hope for an ecumenical council even if they were limited to certain geographical areas on their own. Some of these events and their rationales have been described in the scholarship by Basil Hall, Jill
Raitt, and Donald Nugent. These regional events are important background for what Lubbertus demands as part of a general council in his *De Conciliis*. If Swierenga is correct, there was even a precedent for seeking to redirect the course of the Council of Trent through the terms of safe passage and full participation when Calvin and Viret considered going to Trent, but this of course did not ever come about.

Several works of historical scholarship detail the theological grounds for a general council of the church as this issue is presented in the sixteenth century sources. For example, Steinmetz shows the continuity in Luther and Calvin as they locate the authority of a church council in the authority of God’s word, which is held in a ministerial way by church officers whether in teaching individually or when they gather in council as “venerable interpreters of God’s word.” In his exceptionally well-researched study on sixteenth century ecclesiology which was mentioned earlier in this work, Tadataka Maruyama presents church councils as one part of Beza’s developed ecclesiology and thus as being significant to his understanding of how authority functions in the church.

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12 Steinmetz, 102-103 and 105.

Both of these works are touching upon an important issue for the whole time period even if they are generally limited in interest to one or two representative figures.

In this chapter, Sibrandus Lubbertus’ arguments for the theoretical basis and urgent necessity of a post-Reformation ecumenical council to address the issues dividing Catholics and Protestants is presented as a further aspect to his theology of church authority following the challenge of the Council of Trent and the *Disputations* of Robert Bellarmine—high water marks of the Counter-Reformation. Beyond revealing an essential aspect to his refutation of Bellarmine, Lubbertus’ handling of church councils also gives a window into a poorly understood part of post-Reformation doctrine and church life.

**Historical Context and Antecedents to Lubbertus’ *De Conciliis***

There were many works on church councils which predate the time of Lubbertus. Church fathers such as Augustine showed great confidence in the potential of a council to pronounce judgments on doctrine or life, even describing the authority of a general council as being “infallible.”14 This confidence set up the debates of the late medieval period over the relative power of the papacy compared to that of a council. The most significant voices of the conciliar movement like the fourteenth century’s Marsilius of Padua were intent on decreasing the power of the papacy through the increasing power of councils.15 In contrast, others like Juan de Torquemada advocated a closer tie between


papal authority and the authority of the general council, arguing that these two acting in unison possess greater authority than even Scripture to the degree that they establish the limits of scripture’s canon.

Leading into the time of the Reformation, there remained many ambiguities about church councils even beyond the question of the pope's relative authority, which was defined by the two poles of the Council of Constance (1414-1418) which restrained the pope through the conciliar movement to the Council of Ferrara/Florence (1438-1445) and the Fifth Lateran Council (1512-1517) which both favored greater papal power. There were also disputes over the relationship between provincial councils and general councils, the place of emperors in initiating councils, the presence of delegates who were not bishops, practical considerations about the setting of agendas, the place of civil authorities in representing state interests, and the necessity of papal approval for what was decided in such councils. All of these finer points were extrapolations of what was required to assure the guidance of the Holy Spirit when a church council was convened even within a united Roman Catholic church prior to the Reformation.16

Martin Luther embraced the necessity of general councils as soon as he encountered various expressions of opposition to his reforms from the Roman Catholic authorities he denounced. Drawing from the late medieval conciliar movement, he favored having a modern general council subject only to the Scripture as a guard against false claims to infallibility either from the papacy or from the council itself (if acting

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independently from God's word). According to Luther, such certainty can only be located in the infallible rule and authority of Scripture. In the Leipzig Disputation (1519), which Luther attended, it was the debate with Eck over the papacy which brought Luther to give his sharpest challenge Roman Catholic views of infallibility to that date, and at this time he again asserted the need for a new council which would actually be founded upon the authority of Scripture.

The very next year, he published his letter *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* (1520) in part to challenge the notion that only a pope can call a council and to argue for the power of civil authorities to do this in the interest of it being a truly "free" council independent from the pope. In this treatise, he argued from both the pattern of the New Testament's Jerusalem Council (in Acts 15) and from historical precedent (through Constantine's involvement in calling the Council at Nicaea) that it is not the place of the pope to be involved in the calling of a general council. Years later, he developed these ideas at greater length in his treatise, *On Councils and the Church* (1539), which called—even at this rather late stage in the Protestant Reformation—for a "free Christian council in German lands."¹⁷

By this time, Luther had not only effectively questioned (in the minds of all Protestants, at least) the authority of a council which operates apart from Scriptural authority. Nor had he merely denied the pope the right to call such a council. He had also convinced many in Lutheran regions that there could be no fair general council to address the issues of Protestant theology which was held in a Catholic region such as

¹⁷ See Luther Works WA vol. 54, 208. See also the discussion in Nugent, *Ecumenism in the Age of the Reformation*, 5.
Italy. Therefore, the princes of the Schmalkaldic League unanimously refused an invitation given by the papacy in 1537 which would have brought them to the council which eventually took place in Trent.\textsuperscript{18} In many ways, Luther's emphases framed the discussion for several generations of Protestant theologians on the topics of general councils and how a new council might actually be held to the satisfaction of the Protestant side given the controversy with Rome.

John Calvin wrote on church councils both according to occasional needs in his reform efforts and in his exposition of Christian ecclesiology in the \textit{Institutes}. As for the occasional needs which moved him to write about councils, his 1539 \textit{Reply to Sadolet} shows Calvin's thoroughly polemical response to Roman Catholic critique of Protestant doctrine and worship. The Cardinal Salodet had just recently, through an open letter, expounded upon the reasons for the city fathers of Geneva to return to the embrace of the Catholic fold and refuse to go any further with the Reformation they had so far adopted. This provided Calvin a timely platform to address some matters of Roman Catholic doctrine and practice which he no doubt desired to do. Whereas Sadolet charged that Protestants effectively give no authority to any man since they insist on personal interpretations of the Bible to be the only source of authority, Calvin denies this to be the case. He writes, "...although we hold that the Word of God alone lies beyond the sphere of our judgment, and that Fathers and Councils are of authority only in so far as they agree with the rule of the Word, we still give to Councils and Fathers such rank and honour as it is proper for them under Christ to hold."\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{18} Nugent, 5.

\textsuperscript{19} John Calvin, "Reply by John Calvin to the letter by Cardinal Sadolet to the Senate and People of Geneva," in \textit{Calvin: Theological Treatises}, trans. and ed. J. K. S. Reid (Philadelphia:
Like Luther, Calvin does not see any additional revelation or separate church authority which functions independently of the Scriptures, but he is quick to explain in his *Institutes* that Jesus Christ has appointed men to have authority insofar as they adhere to the word of God. This authority is found whenever Christians gather in Christ's name, but it has particularly important expression whenever pastors gather to discern the will of God from the Scriptures and to distinguish Scriptural truth from heresy. This form of gathering includes any ecumenical council either in the ancient church or even into the current day which shows itself to be under the rule of Jesus Christ through being "governed by his [i.e., Christ's] word and Spirit."  

As Steinmetz points out, this means that, strictly speaking, the Protestants like Luther and Calvin in these treatments of church councils "...are not conciliarists. They do not believe that a council, properly assembled and constituted, will necessarily be led by the Holy Spirit to an infallible definition of the truth." Yet, as they build upon the medieval conciliarist tradition, they are not altogether different in how they also seek to

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Westminster Press, 1954), 255. In his essay comparing Luther's *On Councils and the Church* with Calvin's *Reply to Sadolet*, Steinmetz explains, "The two treatises give a glimpse of what we might call an ecumenically Protestant position on the authority of Church, magisterium, Scripture and tradition. They sum up the best Protestant thinking prior to the convocation of the Council of Trent. They are important, not only as a clue to the deep affinity between Luther and Calvin, but also to the self-understanding of Protestantism at the end of its second decade." “Luther and Calvin on Church and Tradition,” 101.

20 The larger context of this quotes reads as follows: "The fact that I shall here be rather severe does not mean that I esteem the ancient councils less than I ought. For I venerate them from my heart, and desire that they be honored by all. But here the norm is that nothing of course detract from Christ. Now it is Christ's right to preside over all councils and to have no man share his dignity. But I say that he presides only when the whole assembly is governed by his word and Spirit." John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles [The Library of Christian Classics, vol. XXI] (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), IV.9.1, p. 1166.

21 Steinmetz, “Luther and Calvin on Church and Tradition,” 103.
oppose the authority of the pope through the precedent of the great early church councils now appropriated and filtered through the Reformation conviction of Scripture's authority alone. In the Reply to Sadoleto, in the Institutes, and even in his commentaries, Calvin is thus quick to point out specific ways in which some of the ancient councils failed to conform to God's Word and thus showed themselves to be fallible and even at times heretical without the authority of Christ demonstrated through pronouncements based on his word in Scripture.

Calvin's exposition of the passage at the beginning of the fourth chapter of First John about the need to "test the spirits" is illuminating as to how he sees the connections between Scriptural truth and the authority of church pronouncements from a council, and it also shows how seamlessly the reformers like Calvin could move from exposition to dogmatics to polemics given the controversies of the day:

"...[T]he Spirit will only thus guide us to a right discrimination, when we render all our thoughts subject to God's word...for that alone is true doctrine which is drawn from it...."

"But what Papists under this pretense hold, that whatever has been decreed in councils is to be deemed as certain oracles, because the Church has once proved them to be from God, is extremely frivolous. For though it be the ordinary way of seeking consent, to gather a godly and holy council, when controversies may be determined according to God's word; yet God has never bound himself to the decrees of any council. Nor does it necessarily follow, that as soon as a hundred bishops or more meet together in any place, they have duly called on God and inquired at his mouth what is true; nay, nothing is more clear that they have often departed from the pure word of God. Then in this case also the trial which the Apostle prescribes ought to take place, so that the spirits may be proved."  

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Indeed, as Maruyama shows, the great theologians of the early Reformed tradition showed only minor departures from one another in their various formulations of the divine authority expressed in church councils to the extent that they conformed to the word of God. For Calvin, the authority comes from the presence of Christ's word and Spirit. For Bucer, it is also rooted in the presence of Christ's word and Spirit. Beza preferred to speak of the reign of Christ through his Spirit, then clarifying in his *Confession de la Foi* that this is known through a council's conformity to Scripture.\(^{24}\)

The event of the Council of Trent (1545-1563) was quite influential upon all the Protestant theologians who wrote upon ecclesiology and church councils in the latter half of the sixteenth century. The Tridentine decrees which condemned Protestant doctrine provoked—from those same Protestants, of course—numerous treatises and sermons upon the illegitimacy of any church council which is not governed by Scripture. However, as a backdrop to the writings of Lubbertus who was himself writing to refute Bellarmine, it should not be missed that there were ambiguities at Trent which dated back to the medieval conciliar movement. First, Trent was called for by Charles V in order to address disciplinary matters, and thus the role of the emperor (or any other civil magistrate) in being able to call for a council from outside of the leadership of the church was an ambiguity from Trent which Protestants like Lubbertus embraced. To those on the side of the Reformation, it held out hope for the influence of a civil magistrate calling for another council on terms more favorable to the Protestants. Furthermore, the implications of the location for a council seemed to be an open question since, though it started in Trent, it moved to Bologna. Another carryover from the medieval debates was

\(^{24}\) Maruyama, 25. As cited above, Calvin's view is found in the *Institutes*, IV.9.1. Beza's discussion is in *Confession de la Foi*, V.xii.15.
competing nationalist interests, evident in the refusal of the Spanish delegation to follow the move to Bologna, though they were not opposed to Trent as a location. While much of Trent excluded the Protestants, the second period of its sessions which began in 1551 did include an invitation to some Protestants. Finally, far from reflecting the will of the papacy, Trent included a brief debate about the possibility of the pope actually opposing one decision of the council, as it was discussed during the time of Pius IV. While the decisions of Trent provoked a response from Protestants about the ecclesiology of ecumenical councils and the doctrine formally adopted through a new church council, the controversial outworkings of the Council of Trent suggested that Protestant demands in the late sixteenth century for a new and fair church council were not so hard to imagine since some of these things were associated with Trent itself.

Theodore Beza deserves special consideration in any survey of sixteenth century Protestant theology concerning church councils prior to Lubbertus not only because the Geneva theologian wrote so much on the topic but also because he produced many of these writings following the commencement of Trent's council if not upon its conclusion. As noted above, he also had a personal influence upon Lubbertus, who studied in Geneva briefly and maintained epistolary correspondence with Beza in the years which followed.

Like Calvin before him, Beza held that a church council is given authority through expressing Christ's rule by his word and Spirit. Councils are not inherently infallible, he writes, but they have infallible authority by their submission to God's


26 Maruyama, 229.
word. Their only legitimate purposes are to maintain pure doctrine and to enact church discipline. Consequently, if it is a general council (as opposed to a mere regional or national one) then it must represent the whole universal church in bringing together those from every part of it, and it may never produce a new article of faith. He supports the right of the magistrate to call the council even though it was ministers who called for the first such gathering with the Jerusalem Council, but he also qualifies that by saying that only the delegates sent by the church ought to be involved in any eventual ruling.

Beza's idea that the civil magistrate can and should intervene in the affairs of the church both as a guardian of the principle of sola Scriptura and in order to include those who would otherwise be excluded from participation (i.e., all Protestants) is called "conciliar positivism" by Tadataka Maruyama. The best expression of this is Beza's 1566 treatise De Pace Christianarum, which, even for its late date in the aftermath of the Council of Trent, is a remarkably familiar line of reasoning when compared with Luther's writings over 40 years earlier. Beza explicitly acknowledges his continuity with Luther when he expresses agreement with the Lutheran demands at the 1524 Diet of Nuremberg that the only council which holds the possibility of fairness would be one

27 Maruyama, 230, 9.
28 Maruyama, 10, 229, 27.
29 Maruyama, 9, 229. Writing about Beza's statements on general and national/regional councils in his 1559 Confession de la Foi, Maruyama generalizes that the Beza Reformer appears as "...typically Protestant and magisterial with the strong flavor of optimism about the conciliar solution for the contemporary religious discords of his time." Maruyama, 10. In the Latin publication of the same Confession the next year, Beza is even open to the civil magistrate presiding over such a council. Maruyama, 15.
30 Maruyama, 63.
31 Theodore Beza, Pace de Christianarum Ecclesiarum Concilium (Geneva, 1566).
called by the emperor as "a Free Christian Council in German Lands." At the time of writing *De Pace Christianarum*, Beza's hopes were that Maximilian II and the German princes might call for a council which would assure a Roman Catholic delegation would be countered by a combined Lutheran-Reformed delegation to represent doctrinal positions widely shared by Protestants though having been condemned at Trent.  

Theodore Beza's writings on church councils which are established upon the authority of Scripture and serve as a safeguard for the doctrinal purity of the church—whether called by churchmen or by the civil magistrate—link together an earlier Protestant plea for a council to vindicate the Reformation with the later Protestant charge that Trent had been unjust and illegitimate in several fundamental ways. Therefore, he calls the church to return to the model of ecclesiastical assemblies mostly consistently expressed by the ancient church when general councils decided the issues of Trinity and Christology upon the word of God. In general, the progress of time had supplied Beza more examples of bad councils than good councils clearly grounded in God's word, but that did not keep him from a rather optimistic outlook concerning the possibility for a church council to be called in the sixteenth century to embrace the doctrine of the Protestant Reformation as most consistent with the Christ's reign over his church. In all of these ways, he is a notable antecedent to Lubbertus on the topic of church councils.

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32 Maruyama, 26.

33 Maruyama summarizes this outlook, saying "[I]f the right over a council is given to the papal party, the result will be the ruin, rather than the peace, of the Christian religion. But if it is given to the Emperor and princes, the council will become a useful means for obtaining religious peace." Maruyama, 64-65.

34 Maruyama, 231-232.
Following the time of the Council of Trent, there were a steady number of responses from major Protestant theologians treating the topic of church councils, and of course all of these were critical of the outcomes of Trent for claiming spiritual authority without finding that authority in the word of God. Bullinger's *De Conciliis*\(^{35}\) appeared in 1561, combining together extensive historical survey with biblical support for the necessity of having support from God's word when making any judgment in the context of a church council. Soon after, Mattias Flacius Illyricus published a 1563 treatise critiquing both the procedures and judgments of the Council of Trent for their inconsistency with Scripture. A true ecumenical council, he asserts, is distinguished by its submission to the authority of Scripture.\(^{36}\)

More refutations of Trent (and its Roman Catholic understanding of church councils) followed the publication of Bellarmine's *Controversies*—some being roughly contemporary with Lubbertus' *De Conciliis* (1601). Franciscus Junius's *Animadversiones* (1600) gave an impassioned defense of Scripture as the only authority a church council might lay claim to possess.\(^{37}\) At this time, William Whitaker's lectures of refutation against Robert Bellarmine also appeared posthumously due to the efforts of his assistant John Allenson.\(^{38}\) In both form and substance, this work resembles the refutation penned

\(^{35}\) Heinrich Bullinger, *De Conciliis* (Zurich: Froschauer, 1561).

\(^{36}\) Mattias Flacius Illyricus, *Protestatio concionatorum aliquot Augustanae confessionis adversus conventum Tridentinum*... (1563).


\(^{38}\) William Whitaker, *Praelectiones Doctiss. Viri Guilielmi Whitakeri...in quibus tractatur Controversia de Conciliis contra Pontificios, imprimis Robertum Bellarminum Jesuitam, in sex
by Lubbertus. His six chapters address the contrasting answers of Roman Catholicism and the Protestants on such matters as the necessity of councils, the authority to call a council, the delegates who should attend, the right person to preside, the relation to the papacy, and whether they are infallible. As in Lubbertus' *De Conciliis*, there is attention to Scripture as well as patristic support and historical anecdotes, and he ultimately favors a more involved role of the civil magistrate in calling and regulating the logistics of a general council so as to assure a fair treatment of Protestant doctrine than given at Trent. Obviously, he also believes that councils themselves are fallible although they receive authority through the infallibly true standard of God's word which alone can define doctrine, settle controversy and bind the conscience.  

**Robert Bellarmine on Church Councils**

As with several other polemical treatises he wrote, Sibrandus Lubbertus wrote *De Conciliis* specifically to refute Bellarmine's *Disputationes*, which had a section upon church councils. Therefore, Lubbertus' views line up generally with other Protestant theologians, and he more narrowly follows patterns among the polemical responses to the Counter-Reformation and to the Council of Trent, but in *De Conciliis* he is specifically concerned with what Bellarmine wrote about councils and how he interpreted the Council of Trent in the *Disputationes* as a rebuke to the Protestants.

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*Quaestiones distributa, quas pagina sequens indicabit*, ed. Joannis Allenson (Herbon: Christopher Corvinus, 1601).

A thorough assessment of Bellarmine's view of church councils is beyond the scope of this study. However, some general description will provide better context for an analysis of Lubbertus' response (which was, of course, a refutation). Bellarmine in the *Disputationes* is, as always, a brilliant polemicist. He not only shows mastery of the Roman Catholic tradition's theology and development, but he also shows great familiarity with all of the major Protestant theologians of the sixteenth century. Between his presentation of church teaching, his defense of it from Scripture and tradition, his presentation of Trent, and his anticipation of Protestant critiques and the responses which he has for each, his treatment of councils is substantial in length and intricacy.

In short, Bellarmine connects the role of church councils with the authority and infallibility of the papacy. In fact, he even states that a debate about the authority and function of a council is in essence a debate about the pope. A true council of the church finds all of its legitimacy in its relationship to the Roman pontiff's authority, calling, leadership, and final approval. The work of the council is therefore to act as judges concerning some controversy's consistency with the Roman Catholic tradition. This role of acting as judges comes through the sanction of the papacy and it cannot happen simply through the gathering of church leaders—far less if it is through a gathering of

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42 Bellarmine, *Primi tomi quarta controversia generalis*, 73. Bellarmine acknowledges that is in disagreement with what he has read from the works of Luther, Calvin, Chemnitz, Brenz, and Cochlaeus.
those having no communion with the papacy such as when the Protestants gather in a
colloquy. These assemblies of Lutherans and Reformed earlier in the sixteenth century
therefore do not satisfy the requirements of a church council according to Bellarmine,
despite what was claimed at the time.\textsuperscript{43}

Showing his broad familiarity with the writings of Protestants, Bellarmine at one
point even lists the conditions which he understands the Lutheran and Reformed
theologians giving for what they considered necessary to a general council given the
controversy over the Reformation in the sixteenth century. He lists those Protestant
demands as (a.) a rejection of Trent's decrees; (b.) the location must be in Germany; (c.)
the pope may not call the council or preside over it in the interest of impartiality; (d.) it
must only follow Scripture and not tradition; (e.) the exclusion of Roman prelates; (f.)
faithfulness to the Augsburg Confession; and (g.) the guarantee of safe passage and free
participation so that it is a "free council."

\textsuperscript{44} Bellarmine carefully disproves the
theological justification for each one of these demands based upon his own understanding
of ecclesiology, but it is remarkable how well this passage summarizes the concerns of
Lubbertus and the other Protestant polemicists who issued replies to the \textit{Disputationes}.

\textbf{Occasion of Lubbertus' \textit{De Conciliis}}

For Lubbertus to address the theology of church councils in \textit{De Conciliis} was not
a merely hypothetical issue. Throughout Lubbertus' systematic refutation of Bellarmine

\textsuperscript{43} Bellarmine, \textit{Primi tomi quarta controversia generalis}, 8. Bellarmine cites Augsburg,
Nuremberg, Spirensia, Ratisbon, and Worms as examples of "Lutheran" gatherings which do not
satisfy the requirements of having a general council.

\textsuperscript{44} Bellarmine, \textit{Primi tomi quarta controversia generalis}, 95-99.
by the use of Scriptural exegesis, historical example and logical syllogism, he has the Council of Trent in mind as the primary example of what is wrong with Roman Catholic understandings of councils, and in his positive formulation of church councils he is especially concerned to correct all of the abuses (in his judgment, of course) which took place from 1545-1563 in Trent and Bologna.\footnote{Van der Woude, 93-94.}

While all theologians agree that a church council must seek to be \textit{ecumenical} in representing the whole church, Lubbertus consistently charges that what took place in Trent was simply an exercise of \textit{the papacy} (who called it and presided over it\footnote{“...Unde appareat non Oecumenicum sed Papale Concilium fuisse...” Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 95.}) even when there were many logistical alternatives possible which had been widely discussed before Trent began concerning the role of the civil magistrate and the ways to provide a just hearing for dissenting voices in the church.\footnote{Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 108-109.} By favoring the papacy's interests and excluding the voice of Protestants, Lubbertus regularly laments in \textit{De Conciliis} about the lack of fairness in how the controversy was addressed at Trent.\footnote{Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 53, 120, 96.} From the Protestant point of view, Trent was announced by the papacy as a way to resolve controversial matters with fairness to all and due process to Protestant theologians in particular. However, Lubbertus writes in his \textit{De Conciliis}, what actually took place fell short of fairness and due process if the Protestants had any realistic expectation of these things.\footnote{Cf. Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 124: “...credibile est papam in bulla indictionis scripsisse solos Episcopos voces decisivas habere debere, ut hoc astu protestantes ex concilio exterminaret. In nulla enim alia indictionis Epistola, quod sciam, illa cautela posita est. Palam igitur clamavit Concilium, Concilium occulte autem impedivit illud.”}
The location of this council which condemned Protestant doctrine is repeatedly raised by Lubbertus in *De Conciliis* and even well before this particular treatise in his first major refutation of Bellarmine.\(^{50}\) In light of the calls for such a council to take place in the German lands since the 1520's, Lubbertus writes that it was a particularly egregious violation of justice to convene the gathering in Italy, a region of perceived papal control. Indeed, Pope Adrian along with the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire had agreed in principle to the condition that a council concerning the Protestant Reformation needed to be a "free council in Germany" where Protestants would have liberty to speak (just as Luther and others demanded).\(^{51}\) Trent was considered by Protestants to be both unsafe for travel and also clearly hostile in its spiritual atmosphere through the influence of the city's bishop, a loyalist to the pope.\(^{52}\) In contrast, many cities in Germany would have been fair to both parties in the controversy while also promising safe passage.\(^{53}\) Between the location in a region loyal to the papacy and the lack of guaranteed safety in travel to and from Trent, Lubbertus charges that the location of the council was effectively another violation of the principle that *sola Scriptura* must govern the doctrine and practice of the church, especially in resolving conflict.\(^{54}\)

Finally, Lubbertus charges that Trent was not "free" as it was explicitly governed by the rule of tradition and not by Scripture alone. This effectively silenced the

\(^{50}\) Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 100; *De Principiis*, 11-12, 479-480.

\(^{51}\) Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 96.

\(^{52}\) Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 96, 97.

\(^{53}\) Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 99.

\(^{54}\) Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 124-127.
Protestant views from being adequately represented and even kept many theologically learned men from attending if they were to appeal to Scripture as the "norm and rule" of all their doctrine rather than Roman Catholic tradition. By so restricting the sources of doctrine and the participants in this way, Lubbertus questions the legitimacy of any pronouncements from the council since it is not "free" to decide any matter but instead bound to the interests and judgments of the pope who presided in the council and required loyalty to attend. There was no way to vindicate those with the Scriptures on their side if they have such strong support from God's word, Lubbertus points out, given the particular format of Trent and the appeal to tradition over Scripture. He goes on to note with a bit of polemical scoffing that, during the Council of Trent, the lack of biblical correction of widely recognized corruptions in the church (i.e., "hereses, simoneae, et alia Paparum flagitia") further proves why this council should be rejected for having no standing as a true ecumenical council worthy of the name.

Responding to the Disputationes of Robert Bellarmine and the historical event of the Council of Trent a generation before Bellarmine, Lubbertus writes De Conciliis both to refute the Roman Catholic position and practices of church councils and to set out a Protestant view of councils which is consistent with God's word. In the preface, he dedicates the volume to Simon Goulartius, a pastor and beloved friend in Geneva, but the

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55 Lubbertus, De Conciliis, 93, 110, 115. In the latter of these passages, Lubbertus presses the point that it was effectively a disingenuous call for a council which is not willing to consider Scriptural arguments for the doctrines under examination: "Palam igitur clamarunt concilium, concilium, occulte vero summis modis impedierunt, ne Protestantes ad Concilium venirent."

56 Lubbertus, De Conciliis, 124.

57 Lubbertus, De Conciliis, 95.
majority of the preface is taken up with an indictment of the papacy for failing to call a council on fair terms in the place of the Reformation (liberum concilium in Germania) but rather calling Trent which limited the assembly's voice to that of the papacy's interests while holding the council in the place of greatest control by the pope. While, Lubbertus expresses, none of these abuses at Trent are able to "extinguish" the gospel (even though they do amount to persecution and deceit in his estimation), he holds out hope that there might yet be a free council in keeping with the Scriptures which might be called to address the doctrinal controversies of the Reformation and be received by the Christian church with the same authority as that of the ancient ecumenical councils.  

Analysis of Lubbertus’ De Conciliis

Lubbertus begins the treatise by handling the question of who has the right to call a church council—the first topic on which he wants to refute Bellarmine. Since a council represents the whole church of all the faithful scattered throughout the world (or over some smaller region with which the assembly is concerned), Lubbertus argues that it is not fitting for the papacy to call the council if the papacy does not reflect all the Christian faithful for which the council would speak. For while Bellarmine insists that Christ's words about "two or more gathered in my name" (in Matthew 18:20) directly apply only to those assemblies called by the pope, Lubbertus has a very different

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58 Lubbertus, De Conciliis, 2 recto, 2 verso. Cf. also van der Woude, 93.

59 Lubbertus writes, "Adversarius dicit 'Papae Romani esse ea convocare.'" Lubbertus, De Conciliis, 3.

60 Lubbertus, De Conciliis, 1.
understanding of those words "in my name," following the interpretation of Calvin. Lubbertus quotes the Genevan Reformer of an earlier generation at this point to establish that gatherings in Christ's name must be where his word alone is given the place of rule. By distinguishing between the gathering "in Christ's name"—which he takes to be a reference to the word and Spirit of Christ—and the gathering in communion with the papacy, Lubbertus offers a very different answer to the question of who might justly call a council.

While the pope is merely the bishop of Rome in the mind of Lubbertus, he does foresee the case in which a wide consensus of bishops throughout the church might together call for a church council. In his mind, this is a much more valid call for a council than that which comes from the pope.

But, perhaps tipping his hand as to what he considered the most promising possibility for the time in which he lived, he spends most of his argument over who may call a church council by focusing on the civil magistrate, especially the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. This becomes a common refrain in *De Conciliis*, just as he inserts this notion into some of his other publications. The Scriptural support is how the Lord entrusted the protection of pure doctrine and pure worship to the kings of the Old Testament in Israel, especially those pious kings like David, Solomon, Josiah and

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62 Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 33-34. Lubbertus says that this was how the Jerusalem Council was called in fact, but it is no longer possible since the time of Constantine.

63 Van der Woude, 373.
Hezekiah (and those holy men who foreshadowed the kingly office—namely, Moses and Joshua). Lubbertus sees this as the Old Testament parallel to how the civil magistrate is to protect pure doctrine in the time of the New Testament church by calling for church councils when some matter of controversy threatens her well-being. This outlook is reflected in the preface to Lubbertus' commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism which dedicates the work to the Dutch States General and to Prince Maurice, all of whom Lubbertus commends for their faithful discharge of God's appointment to protect and defend true religion in the Netherlands, just as God-fearing magistrates have done back to the time of Moses and Joshua.

The civil magistrate also reflects for Lubbertus a remaining God-ordained authority structure common to both Protestants and Catholics though they were not in ecclesiastical communion together anymore. Therefore, since the papacy's authority was not recognized by Protestant clergy or theologians and the Protestant church's demand for a new council was not recognized as legitimate from the vantage point of those in the Roman Catholic communion, the remaining source of authority which might regulate church life with any credible claim to jurisdiction over both parties was only the civil

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64 Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 37: "Iosias enim et Ezechias instaurarunt cultum Dei ad normam scripturarum. Ergo et Imperatores Christiani possunt collapsum Dei cultum Ecclesiasticasque controversias ad scripturarum normam instaurare."

65 Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 82-83.

66 Sibrandus Lubbertus, *Commentarius in catechesin palatino-belgicam* (Franicae: Joannes Lamrinck, 1618), 2[recto]-5. Even his *Responsio ad Pietatem Hugonis Grotii* (1614) reflects this ideal for the civil magistrate as he uses the dedication to commend regional magistrates for their efforts to oppose Remonstrantism in Gelderland, Veluwe and Arnhem. (Cf. van der Woude, 281.) At this time, he considered it unnecessary to address the threat of Remonstrantism in a national synod as it ultimately took place from 1618-1619 at Dordrecht.
magistrate.\textsuperscript{67} As Lubbertus argues in a number of different contexts, this not only gives the emperor a proper claim to call for a council, but it gives him the most authority to do so in a way which has relevance for the largest segment of leaders (bishops) in the church—particularly if they are in conflict with one another.\textsuperscript{68} On this logic, Lubbertus suggests that if there is to be a church council to address the conflict of the Reformation, it \textit{must} be the emperor who calls for it.

Lubbertus points to the precedent of church history to support this role for the civil magistrate. Whenever there has been a provincial council (\textit{concilium provincialia}), it has always been called by princes and local bishops.\textsuperscript{69} What is true at the provincial level is true for ecumenical councils, beginning with the first one to follow the time of the apostles. For the great Council of Nicaea, it was the Emperor Constantine who called it together. Using an example which Bellarmine himself raises for the authority of the papacy to call a council, Lubbertus points out that when Pope Adrian II sought a council, he appealed to the emperor to call for it.\textsuperscript{70} He argues that, historically speaking, even when the demand for a general council began with bishops, it became a call for a council through the emperor who alone has the power to impose the summons on the church in the land. Meanwhile, of course, the civil magistrate is not above the council he calls but is in fact among those subject to its decisions pertaining to spiritual matters in the

\textsuperscript{67} Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 101.

\textsuperscript{68} Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 34; "Non igitur possunt concilia universalia cogi, nisi ab eo, qui Episcopos omnes cogendi potestatem habet. Ille olim fuit Imperator." Cf. Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 31-33.

\textsuperscript{69} Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 13-14.

\textsuperscript{70} Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 27-29.
If a pope opposes the call for a council, he has historically been subject to that call if made by the civil magistrate.\textsuperscript{72}

In good scholastic fashion, Lubbertus also points out that the authorities whom Bellarmine would like to have in support are actually on his side in the matter. Both ancient church fathers (e.g., Jerome) and more recent eminent theologians within the Roman Catholic church (e.g., Marsilius, Zabarella, and Molina) affirmed the authority of the emperor to call a council rather than the pope.\textsuperscript{73}

A related point in Bellarmine's treatment of councils is that the pope not only has the exclusive right to \textit{call} a council but to \textit{preside} over it as well, just as all of the Catholic apologists of the Counter-Reformation were quick to remind Protestants that the Apostle Peter sat "over" the Jerusalem Council. Bellarmine suggests that the phrase from Matthew 18:20—gathering \textit{in Christ's name}—is only properly applied when a council gathers under the pope, who presides over it.\textsuperscript{74}

In his first published treatise refuting Bellarmine on the topics of theological foundations, \textit{De Principiis}, Lubbertus takes direct aim at this Roman Catholic claim to the pope's authority over even church councils by challenging it with a number of arguments from the Bible relevant to Peter and spiritual authority.\textsuperscript{75} But it is in \textit{De Conciliis} that Lubbertus argues this assertion at greater length, responding point-by-point

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\textsuperscript{71} Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 20.

\textsuperscript{72} Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 17-21.

\textsuperscript{73} Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 37, 100.

\textsuperscript{74} Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 7.

\textsuperscript{75} Lubbertus, \textit{De Principiis}, 484-487.
to Bellarmine and developing a Protestant doctrine of church councils in the process which explicitly rejects the particular authority of the papacy as it continued to claim greater authority than council alone or Scripture alone.\textsuperscript{76}

For Lubbertus, the reason the pope is not above a council and justified in leading it is bound up in all of the reasons that he does not see biblical support for the supremacy of the pope as well as in all of the reasons why God's word describes the church as having authority through many officer bearers, not just the bishop of Rome. Bellarmine's insistence that gatherings \textit{in Christ's name} are those occasions of gatherings of bishops over which the pope alone presides does not recognize that both the apostles in general (Matthew 28:19) and Christian believers in general (Colossians 3:17) are commanded to do things in Christ's name, and neither of these contexts leave room for an action of just Peter or a successor in the papacy. Lubbertus argues that it requires making an unsubstantiated inference about Christ's statement to think that that Matthew 18:20 has in view the leadership of the papacy over a gathering of a general council.\textsuperscript{77}

Whereas Bellarmine presents that the pope as the supreme head of the church must preside over any church council either by his physical presence in moderating or by some clear reflection of his ordering if he is not able to be present himself—presiding \textquotedblleft \textit{per se}\textquotedblright{} or \textquotedblleft \textit{per suos legatos}\textquotedblright{} in Bellarmine's distinction—Lubbertus rejects this necessity.\textsuperscript{78} Not seeing any scriptural support for the papacy as a distinct office, he

\textsuperscript{76} See Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 184ff, which is his fifth and final chapter of the treatise.

\textsuperscript{77} Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 7. Quite clearly, Lubbertus is referring to Col. 3:17, although it was incorrectly printed as "Col. 3:13" since that verse does not fit into Lubbertus' argument until one reaches the words "in the name of the Lord Jesus" at the end of the paragraph in 3:17.

\textsuperscript{78} Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 65.
suggests that either someone with the highest civil authority in Christendom (i.e., the emperor) or simply one chosen by the assembly would be much preferred. He then points to the precedent of Nicea, when it was not the pope (Sylvester) who presided but the emperor (Constantine).\(^79\) Lubbertus argues that Bellarmine's insistence on the pope presiding rests upon his appeal to titles for the pope which go far beyond the support of Scripture (for example, "head of all Christians" or "supreme pastor"), and when it comes to church history there are reports of some popes reportedly refusing to come to a council, as it was reported of Pope John by Otthonis the Great.\(^80\) Therefore, Lubbertus strongly rejects the idea of the pope having the right to preside over any council based on the lack of support in both Scripture and historical practice.

As Lubbertus himself acknowledges in his treatise on councils,\(^81\) his digressions upon the papacy are a return to a subject on which he had already written at length in order to refute Bellarmine.\(^82\) However, he sees it as important enough to the effort to discredit Bellarmine on councils that he frequently finds himself returning to the arguments against the supremacy of the papacy. When the arguments of Bellarmine for the presiding of the pope at councils rests upon a standard title for the papacy in the Roman Catholic tradition, Lubbertus will give an extended argument about why that title

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\(^79\) Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 67. Lubbertus suggests if it was not the emperor presiding, then it was Josiah.

\(^80\) Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 65.

\(^81\) Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 189.

\(^82\) Sibrandus Lubbertus, *De papa Romano, libri decem: scholastice & theologice collati cum disputationibus Roberti Bellarmini* (Academia Franekerana: Aegidivm Radaevm, 1594).
is not suitable to the pope. When Bellarmine appeals to Scripture in order to locate justification for the exalted place of the pope, then Lubbertus can write lengthy explanations of those same passages which seek to show that Bellarmine is taking them out of context and misusing them if they instead show the foundational authority of Jesus Christ or the apostolic office in the church. When Bellarmine appeals to church fathers for the role of the papacy, then Lubbertus is ready with his own survey of the church fathers for the ways in which they do not provide support for the idea of the pope as the head of the church who would have such privileges of leadership at a council. When historical anecdotes offer contrary evidence to the generalizations of Bellarmine in his claims for the papacy, Lubbertus will offer that evidence to make his case. And when sarcasm and mockery present a way to challenge the claims of Bellarmine, Lubbertus is

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83 He explains why the title "Papam" was used for Cyprian when bishop of Rome, but he also qualifies how it was not meant to be title for the duration of the church regarding one particular bishopric. Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 67. Lubbertus disputes the title "leader of the whole church" (*princeps totius Ecclesiae*) in *De Conciliis*, 107. He discusses the title of "head of the body of Christ" for the pope in *De Conciliis*, 194.

84 Lubbertus addresses Matthew 16:18 in *De Conciliis*, 189. This leads him into a discussion of the Apostle Paul's use of the word "foundation" in contexts like 1 Corinthians 3:11 and Romans 15:20 in *De Conciliis*, 189-191. He wants to make it clear that the Apostle Paul never had Peter in mind in any other contexts, and therefore it is improperly given to Peter as if he held a distinct office from the other apostles, and it is certain without support to give this title to a continuing position in the church such as the bishop of Rome. His next passage is from John 21:15-17, where Lubbertus relates the exhortation to "feed the sheep" to other charges which are meant for all of the apostles, such as Matthew 28:19 and 1 Peter 5:1-4.


86 He explains there was not papacy in the early church in *De Conciliis*, 106-107. He discusses the intention of the Council of Lyon in declaring the pope *rectorem universalis Ecclesiae* in *De Conciliis*, 193-194. Lubbertus sees limits to the authority of the pope relative to church councils in disciplinary cases of the African church fathers. Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 205-209. On the Council of Constance (1414-1418) as a refutation to Bellarmine’s views that the papacy has always been above the council, see *De Conciliis*, 181-182.
ready to bring this into the polemical response as well if it might reflect poorly upon
Bellarmine's logic.\(^{87}\)

There is a different dimension to his rejection of the pope presiding over the
council which Lubbertus sees the in particular subject to be decided concerning the
doctrine and practices of Protestants in the sixteenth century. In this case of the
controversy following the Reformation, the Protestants rejected the idea that any church
leader should minister in the name of Christ or assume any authority in Christ's church if
they do not rightly handle God's word by professing and teaching its doctrine faithfully.
The logical outworking of this view of church office which connects one's qualifications
to essentially Protestant doctrinal commitments is that it would question not only
whether the pope should preside over a council which handles doctrine but it would
further insist that such a man should not even be invited to attend a council called in
Christ's name if he does not rightly "feed the sheep" through teaching sound biblical
doctrine. Indeed, no other bishop in the Roman Catholic communion is qualified to
attend a church council as a delegate either if such fundamental doctrines of the Gospel
are not embraced, Lubbertus declares. Only those "feed the sheep" have any claim to be
bishops in Christ's church.\(^{88}\) While this clearly shows the strong polemics of the era, it

\(^{87}\) Lubbertus scoffs that the presence of Christ as the invisible head of the church and the pope as
the visible head makes the church out to be a two-headed "monster" in the Roman Catholic
conception. *De Conciliis*, 195. He also suggests that Bellarmine greatly overstates the case of
the pope being "immediately called by Christ" since clearly there is a means for this election—
nempe per Cardinales. *De Conciliis*, 196. Elsewhere he challenges Bellarmine with the sarcastic
logic that if the pope is given such authority and is so clearly intended to rule the church in a
position higher than even a church council, he should be also able to alter or annul the decrees of
past councils at will. *De Conciliis*, 207.

\(^{88}\) Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 44. Elsewhere, Lubbertus clarifies that this lack of faithfulness in the
pope's doctrine had led to the charge of heresy by the Protestants. *De Conciliis*, 109:
"...Protestantes accusant Papam, quod a fide deviaverit. In crimen vero haeresis Papa non est
iudex, sed ab alio iudicari debet."
also shows how interrelated were the theological and ecclesiological issues which divided the two sides when they sparred over particular points of church life.

The outcome of Trent raised one more point for Lubbertus in declaring that the pope has no right to preside in church councils—the principle of justice, which, even in the eyes of the world, plainly requires that an accuser cannot lead any court or deliberative body which requires impartiality. Lubbertus makes this point from both reason and according to the testimony of ancient writers and church fathers in his De Principiis, claiming that it nullifies the validity of the Council of Trent as a deliberative body since the pope did preside while leading in the effort to accuse Protestants of heresy having already decided that matter in the past before the council was convened.89 A decade later in writing about councils in particular, his rhetoric is even more stronger, noting that the pope is the "mortal enemy" (capitalis hostis) of Protestants who had been condemning them for decades without due process, so it was not fitting for the pope to sit over Trent if there is to be any appearance of justice in the council.90

While the most important role of any individual is the right to call or to preside over a council, such an assembly always involves a great gathering of representatives for the whole church, and Lubbertus also addresses in De Conciliis the issues of which church leaders are rightly invited to participate. Bellarmine argues, in continuity with the Roman Catholic tradition, that a general council is the gathering of bishops under the headship of the bishop of Rome, and so Bellarmine's argument is based upon the general office of bishop (and the distinct office of the pope among them) having divine


90 Lubbertus, De Conciliis, 109.
appointment to serve as judges in Christ's name. Their decisions are in effect "laws" which "bind the conscience."\(^91\)

Lubbertus recognizes some of this as having biblical support, although he says that it is an incomplete account of how office works in relation to spiritual authority. Moreover, in light of the particular circumstances given the Roman Catholic understanding of the papacy and the nature of the conflict at hand in his day in which Protestants were being condemned without a fair hearing, Lubbertus asserts that this understanding of who ought to participate in a council is completely misguided.

In regard to the council as being merely bishops when they are gathered as judges (one of Bellarmine's most fundamental assertions), he says this is to be "denied, but not simply" (\textit{sed non simpliciter}).\(^92\) It is denied because Lubbertus makes the case from various biblical passages that non-clergy are to be included in any council which represents the universal church and thus brings learned and pious men from the whole church, even if they are not bishops.\(^93\) Indeed, the way the participants at Trent did not represent the whole catholic church is also evident in the requirement of an oath of loyalty to the papacy among those bishops who did attend.\(^94\)

\(^{91}\) Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 58.

\(^{92}\) Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 58-59.

\(^{93}\) "Deinde non est universale, quod unam tantum speciem nempe Clericos complectitur, et alteram speciem nempe Laicos, excludit." Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 46. Concerning the layman whom ought to be included in a church council though his is not a bishop, Lubbertus gives this description: "...viros vero doctus, pios, divinarum literarum peritos, et in rebus Ecclesiasticis exercitatos." \textit{De Conciliis}, 47.

\(^{94}\) Lubbertus notes that these bishops at Trent had to make an oath to condemn the Protestant view as a condition of their attendance. He laments, "...tum una pars fuerit accusator, iudex et testis" and then concludes "...sed hoc est iniquum, pugnatque cum omni justitiae formula...merito protestantes hoc Concilium, in quo nulla iustitiae forma observatur, repudiarunt." Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 124, 127.
Having denied the limitation to Roman Catholic bishops alone, he gives his own version of how the collective voice of ordained church officers functions in relations to Christ's headship over his church around the world, and it requires a very different composition for a general council than that body assembled at Trent. From historical precedent, Lubbertus argues that councils have never been limited simply to bishops, but they have always included other "learned and pious men" (viros doctos et pios) who serve in other offices, such as that of deacon or presbyter. He cites the writings of Theophilus Alexandrinus, who wrote that councils included calls to "all bishops and men of wisdom," and Lubbertus notes that the Synod of Antioch includes a record of bishops, presbyters, and deacons being in attendance. Cyprian similarly favored the inclusion of godly men besides simply bishops. This brings him to the conclusion that in terms of the Christian tradition and church history, the most important consideration of one being invited to attend and speak at a council was the determination of one's orthodoxy.

While the precedent of church history is significant for polemical sparring with Bellarmine, Lubbertus thinks it is the Scriptures alone which must decide the issue, and he argues at length that the most important passage having to do with church councils in the pages of God's word—the Jerusalem Council in Acts chapter 15—includes the

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95 See especially Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 197-199. (Discussed below.)

96 Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 44-45.

97 Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 45.

98 He writes that those who should be invited to attend and speak are "...omnes viros bonos, qui sunt integrae vitae, moderati, non contentiosi, sacrarum scripturarum periti, et in redus Ecclesiasticis exercitati." Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 46-47.
explicit detail about elders being included.99 But, lest this suggest that Lubbertus or even Bellarmine are content to choose isolated verses to support what they already assume about bishops and elders in the church, it should be noted that, in the pages of De Conciliis which follow, Lubbertus develops a rather sophisticated argument over the hermeneutics of New Testament ecclesiastical offices and what it means for them to be based upon apostolic practices. Lubbertus thinks that the book of Acts is only rightly understood with a more nuanced view of whether apostolic practice is normative for the church in all ages. He therefore gives a lengthy defense of why the detail about presbyters participating in the Jerusalem Council is among those apostolic practices which is normative for the church. He also then observes that there are both continuities and discontinuities between New Testament bishops and Old Testament priests, thus criticizing some of the exegetical method behind Bellarmine's appeal to apostolic example which assumes too much continuity with the priesthood in Israel.100

For his part, Bellarmine defends the idea that the church is a kingdom which must have a single ruler over it. He therefore places the pope in a position of authority over all bishops as well as understanding him in a place of primacy over the whole catholic church. In Bellarmine's ecclesiology, a gathered council of bishops over which the pope presides is the supreme expression of church authority because it gives expression to every dimension of church authority functioning in unity with the papacy at the head.101

99 Lubbertus, De Conciliis, 45-46.

100 Lubbertus, De Conciliis, 47-61.

101 See Lubbertus, De Conciliis, 137, 140.
In contrast, Lubbertus argues that the kingdom of God is ruled "mediately"—namely, through the Holy Spirit's empowerment among those who serve in church office as an expression of Christ's rule through the ministry of God's word. The keys of the kingdom, he says, are not given to the pope but to those who minister the word of Christ in the visible church, including those church leaders who gather in council. It is not their gathering as a council nor the pope's approval of its actions which necessarily grants this authority but only the authority of God's word. Therefore, Christ's kingdom is ruled mediately through prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastors and teachers—all of whom are given to the ministry of God's word.102

Lubbertus argues that the biblical support which Bellarmine gives for Peter's primacy as the first pope is incorrectly understood as establishing a distinct office for Peter, much less does it clearly establish a continuing office which is above all others in the church, giving him the right to preside over all bishops gather in a church council. The main proof text cited by Bellarmine is Matthew 16:18, but for Lubbertus this passage does not establish Peter as being above the other apostles but—through the clarification of John 21:15-19 and 1 Peter 5:2—it merely shows he is given the very same charge and very same authority as they are also given through the common office of apostle.103

While Bellarmine had argued for the headship of the pope over the whole church as well as for his right to preside over a council which gathers in Christ's name, Lubbertus carefully refutes the various part of this view of the church until he arrives at a

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102 Lubbertus, De Conciliis, 197: "...per prophetas, Apostolos, Evangelistas, pastores et doctores." He seems to be quoting from the fourth chapter of Ephesians, which is significant because there the offices are granted as gifts for the church from the ascended Lord Jesus.

103 Lubbertus, De Conciliis, 67.
very different assessment for the place of the pope relative to a general council. "The pope is not above an ecumenical council," Lubbertus writes, but he is instead, like all church members, subject to its decisions whether it is an ecumenical council or a provincial council.\(^{104}\) In this sense the pope is actually below any council and judged by any such gathering if that council is a faithful expression of the ministerial authority which is expressed in the church through the authority of God's word regarding the pope's doctrine or conduct.\(^{105}\) According to Lubbertus, this view of the council's relationship to the papacy is the only one which explains how popes like Marcellinus and Cyprian received censure by the very same councils over which Bellarmine would assume them to have the right to preside.\(^{106}\)

Besides the questions of who is able to call a council and who ought to attend or even lead a council, another broad topic of concern to Lubbertus in *De Conciliis* is the question of infallibility. Is a church council—rightly called and led, of course—always to be understood as infallible? To frame the question this way would lead one to the same answer from Roman Catholics like Bellarmine and Protestants like Lubbertus. They would both affirm that a church council in its proper form is infallible. The area of disagreement is more precisely just how a council is infallible. Again, this brings us back to familiar arguments regarding prolegomena and ecclesiology. As Robert Bellarmine represents the Roman Catholic position, it is the authority of the *papacy* which makes a council infallible if the pope gives it his approval—especially if he leads it as well. On

\(^{104}\) Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 219.

\(^{105}\) Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 219.

\(^{106}\) Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 219-225.
the Protestant side, as articulated by Sibrandus Lubbertus, a church council receives no infallibility or even any authority from the pope. The only authority a council can ever have, according to Lubbertus, is derived from the authority of Scripture—which is itself infallible. Therefore, Lubbertus consistently argues, a council whose pronouncements are given with clear support from God's word are properly called "infallible" because of the infallible source of truth in Scripture.

Apart from giving his own view of conciliar infallibility due to the authority of Scripture, Lubbertus provides a strong refutation to Bellarmine's argument that a church council has authority because of the pope's approval which makes it infallible. He calls this notion a "Jesuitical doctrine" (*Iesuiticam doctrinam*) unknown during the time of Augustine and the church fathers and the earliest ecumenical councils. Indeed, he gives a lengthy historical survey to substantiate the claim that church councils have never been understood to receive their authority from the pope. Taking a rhetorical cue from Erasmus, he argues that Bellarmine's assertion defies even common sense. If the papacy was the source of infallibility in matters of faith and life even when it involves a church council to which he gives approval, then the pope would never need a council since his own judgments would have infallibility on their own.

In contrast to Bellarmine's view of a council's infallibility based upon the infallibility of the pope, Lubbertus offers different arguments that Scripture alone is the basis for any conciliar pronouncement, and when it is this basis then a council is able to

107 Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 160.
108 Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 152-155.
109 Cf. van der Woude, *Sibrandus Lubbertus*, 94.
speak with the infallible authority of Scripture, which is far above that of any mere man (like the pope) who seeks his authority from his office rather than from the word of God. As he had earlier presented in *De Principiis*, Scripture is the only *principium* given to the church, which makes it undoubtedly and necessarily authoritative for the whole church—quite in contrast, he notes, to the inconsistencies and controversies which find their authority in the office of the pope (*Traditiones papales*). The unique authority of Scripture over and against the authority of tradition through the papacy is therefore essential to the freedom of a council to decide matters without prejudice as well as to the authoritative voice of a council for how it will be received by the church.

For the polemical exchange on this subject, nothing was more important than the ability to support one's views with overwhelming examples from Scripture. Bellarmine therefore offers an extended section of his *Disputationes* upon the biblical support for this view of conciliar infallibility in relation to the Petrine office when it gives approval to a church council. He finds support for the papal authority functioning in a church council in Matt. 16:18, 18:20 and 28:20; Luke 10:16 and 22:32; John 16:13; Acts 15:28 and 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:15; and Heb. 13:17. All of these passages are familiar ones in the controversy between Protestants and the Roman Catholic theologians with respect to the

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110 Lubbertus writes with a bit of hyperbole and rhetorical flair, "Quod vero extra sacram Scripturam asseritur, id non recipimus, etiamsi mille Papae illud assererent." *De Conciliis*, 29.

111 Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 111. For the presentation of Lubbertus’ doctrine of Scripture as a *principium*, see chapter 3 above.

112 Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 115-118.

113 In Bellarmine’s *Disputationes de controversis christianae fidei adversus sui temporis haeretics*, this is found in the 4th Controversy, Part 1, Book 2, chapter 2. See *Primi tomi quarta controversia generalis, de conciliis, et ecclesia militante, quatuor libris comprehensa*, 101-105.
papacy and the role of tradition, but Lubbertus still handles these one by one, clarifying when in his interpretation Bellarmine is taking them out of context. For example, he notes with respect to several of these passages that they are speaking of a custodianship of Scripture rather than a mandate to produce authoritative tradition after the apostles. In other cases, he explains it as a charge to the apostles as a whole rather than as a narrow promise to the distinct office for Peter and his successors or some future gathering of bishops in a council.114

With most of these New Testament passages, Lubbertus argues that they have nothing in context which would suggest they are a promise of infallibility for duly called church councils since they are words concerning the apostles which do not have any explicit reference to future generations.115 Even in the case of the Jerusalem Council in Acts chapter 15, Lubbertus thinks it is not fair interpretation to leap from the Holy Spirit's guidance of that one apostolic gathering in Jerusalem to the presumption of the Holy Spirit's perfect leading of all of the church councils of the Roman Catholic Church hundreds of years later.116 Lubbertus also frequently questions Bellarmine's conclusions about infallibility when Christ's presence with his disciples or his people is concerned in any of those passages. Not all who know the presence of Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit are infallible, Lubbertus insists, and he looks to the biblical reasons to

114 Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 128-144.

115 See *De Conciliis*, 128, 130, 135, and 144 for exegetical arguments questioning whether infallibility is relevant for any believers beyond the inspired apostles whom Jesus originally chose and sent.

116 On the Jerusalem Council's pattern and whether it can be applied to future councils, see *De Conciliis*, 132-134.
understand this as applicable to all Christians who can be comforted to know Christ's presence—again, not simply to Peter or those who might gather in a future council according to Bellarmine's application of the text. Indeed, visible churches can and do fail, and so the promise of the Lord Jesus to be with his disciples should not be understood as a confirmation of infallibility.\textsuperscript{117}

Throughout \textit{De Conciliis}, Lubbertus offers various arguments for the sole authority of Scripture in leading the church, and so he speaks of infallibility of a council when that council is faithful to God's word. This offers certainty—not a certainty \textit{from the council itself} but \textit{from the rule of Scripture} which the council follows.\textsuperscript{118} "For whenever the church follows the word of God, then it does not err; and whenever it turns away from it, then it errs."\textsuperscript{119} Therefore he settles on a particular way to express the authority of a church council: its infallible authority is contingent (\textit{quatenus}) upon its decisions being consistent with the express words of Scripture or that which can be necessarily deduced from it.\textsuperscript{120} Only then does it have absolute force (\textit{vim legis absolutam}) to bind the conscience.\textsuperscript{121} This conviction that the Scriptures alone are the only norm and rule for all Christian doctrine—even if some doctrine is affirmed by a

\textsuperscript{117} Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 128, 135, 138-139.

\textsuperscript{118} Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 149: "Ob hanc causam pia mens non assentitur Synodi decretis per se, sed propter aluid, nempe propter Dei verbum."

\textsuperscript{119} Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 137: "Cum enim Ecclesia Dei verbum sequitur, tum non errat, et cum ab eo deflectit, tum errat." Cf. also 145-146, 151, and 185.

\textsuperscript{120} Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 59: "...quatenus nobis decreta condunt, quae vel in Dei verbo expressa sunt, vel ex eo necessario deduci possunt, vel denique quatenus in rebus in differentibus decreta condunt, quae cum Dei verbo non pugnant."

\textsuperscript{121} Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 59.
council—was the universal consensus of the early fathers including Augustine in particular, Lubbertus writes.¹²² So, while Lubbertus thinks that one can speak of a council as certain or true or authoritative or infallible, this can only be established through the *principium* of Scripture.¹²³

To be fair, Lubbertus acknowledges that Bellarmine and other Roman Catholic theologians do relate the authority of councils to their agreement with God's word, but he suggests that this is a disingenuous affirmation since they also speak of the church as having greater and logically prior authority to the Scriptures.¹²⁴ He also scoffs at the analogy between the four ancient ecumenical councils and the four inspired evangelists as this seems to imply the immediate inspiration of the councils and an inspiration in such a way that they are not simply authoritative for their adherence to Scripture but by the fact of their gathering under the supervision of the pope.¹²⁵

These theological disagreements about how precisely the Scriptures are given the place of preeminent authority in the Christian church were not new in the time of Lubbertus and Bellarmine, but they can be easily found even among the first years of the Protestant Reformation. Yet, given the way both Protestant and Roman Catholic church life developed over the course of the sixteenth century, these same arguments were revived and adapted for the specific applications they offered regarding ecclesiology and

¹²² Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 111-114.


¹²⁴ Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 185.

¹²⁵ Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 186.
the possible holding of an ecumenical council following the Council of Trent and Robert Bellarmine's monumental polemical work.

For example, when Bellarmine suggests that a council meeting with the papacy's approval is precisely what is needed to determine the boundaries of the canon of Scripture and its right interpretation (as Trent did, he asserts), Lubbertus launches a counter attack in his polemical treatise to establish that the church never makes the Scriptures to be authoritative but only testifies to the authority of canonical books and the doctrine they teach. He thinks that the church rightly affirms what is true, but it never establishes the truth of any matter whether in regard to the canon or the articles of the faith.126 Making an analogy from the Old Testament, Lubbertus notes that in Deuteronomy 17:9-13 the levitical priests had to render judgments for the people of Israel, but these were required to conform to the rule of God's law. So also, Lubbertus explains, must church teaching and conciliar decisions make declarations only upon the rule of God's word and not in order to determine what that Scripture is.127

Elsewhere he notes that bishops cannot determine the scope of what is the believed since God has already done that in his word. So also is a church council limited in its doctrinal pronouncements to merely interpret and teach that which has been clearly defined in the word of God.128 Even the slightest departure from God's word destroys the

126 Regarding the role of the church in fixing the canon, Lubbertus writes, "Concedimus enim et nos Ecclesiam approbare scripturam, et hanc ipsam ab aliiis libris distinguere, sed addimus sacram scripturam non per hanc distinctionem, sed per se Dei verbum esse." He points out that Pighius, Hermannus, and Stapleton all teach the opposite of this that the church makes the boundaries of the canon by her own declaration. Lubbertus, De Conciliis, 186-7.

127 Lubbertus, De Conciliis, 60.

128 Lubbertus, De Conciliis, 43: "Deus igitur definit credenda, Episcopi non definiunt credenda."
authority of a gathered council since it has no basis for any judgment other than that which is revealed in Scripture.\textsuperscript{129} The Roman Catholic explanation of the "two sources" of truth in Scripture and tradition suggests that the pronouncements of popes and councils might be taken along side of God's word as authoritative for the life of the church, but Lubbertus claims that neither a single statement in tradition or an oft repeated doctrine found in church tradition is to be given any place of authority if it is \textit{in conflict or even in addition} to what is taught in Scripture.\textsuperscript{130} His implication in all of these passages is that Trent should clearly not be received as a valid and approved council of the Christian church since it propounded doctrine which is at least \textit{not taught} in God's word and—in its most extreme form of unbiblical heterodoxy—is \textit{clearly opposed} to biblical doctrine by Lubbertus' judgment.

The widely used response by Catholic polemicists of the sixteenth century to these assertions about the sole authority of God's word in establishing doctrine is that this allows anyone at all to defy an ecumenical council (or a series of ecumenical councils!) in claiming the authority to define what constitutes orthodoxy for the Christian church—even if it is not established by a lawfully called council's judgment with the subsequent approval of the papacy. Whether Lubbertus is seeking to be dismissive of a logical fallacy or openly taunting Roman Catholic polemicists for the lack of biblical knowledge among Catholic clergy and laity alike, he remarks that "only the ignorant" are lacking in the ability to discern whether a council makes true and binding declarations in conformity

\textsuperscript{129} Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 59.

\textsuperscript{130} Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 111. Again, Lubbertus' polemical rhetoric takes over here as he sarcastically quips that even if "every council from the time of Aaron" had embraced \textit{Aesop's Fables} "as a principium of Christian doctrine," this would not make it so.
to the Scriptures. For Lubbertus, Scripture is uniquely authoritative and its meaning is clear even when it is necessary for church councils to confirm what the Bible teaches.

Lubbertus has no hesitations in contrasting the fallibility of church councils with the infallibility of God's word since he already assumes it is quite clear that even the most respected and most orthodox of individual church fathers show themselves to be fallible. At one point in *De Conciliis*, he lists some of the most obvious errors of various church fathers, including examples from Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, Bernard, Gregory, Chrysostom, Tertullian, Cyprian, Cyril and Theodoret. If even these "most learned and most pious bishops" can err, then it is possible for gathered councils to err as well, Lubbertus concludes. In fact, Lubbertus compiles an index of patristic passages from some of the greatest of the church fathers in which one can establish the charge that church fathers have erred, and this effectively questions the infallibility of those gatherings even if they are composed of the most learned and pious men.

Indeed, the pattern of fallible councils begins for Lubbertus with the Bible's very own account of the decisions made by various bodies of officers who led the people of God in various times by the Lord's own appointment. In the Old Testament, this includes the fallibility (e.g., wickedness and apostasy) of the prophets in 1 Kings 22 and the prophetic condemnation of the priesthood in the prophetic books. In the New

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131 Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 7. It would seem more likely that Lubbertus is taking a polemical swipe at those in the Roman Catholic Church when he says this is only difficult for "the ignorant."

132 Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 158.

133 Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 158-163.

Testament, councils play a significant role in bringing unjust charges against Jesus Christ in John 11 and Matthew 26. However, more important are the warnings against false shepherds in the church who will lead God’s people astray, suggesting that the Bible teaches anything but infallibility for leaders in the Christian church in passages such as Matthew 24:11, Acts 20:29, and 2 Peter 2:1. Lubbertus also points to the warning against the Antichrist who will lead astray those in the church.

One of the longest single chapters in *De Conciliis* is when Lubbertus surveys church history with a view to evaluating the judgments of those church councils claimed to be ecumenical and therefore *authoritative* and *infallible* by Bellarmine and the papacy. Some of them are deemed by Lubbertus to be inconsistent with one another, such as the mutually contradictory statements over transubstantiation. During the time of the medieval conciliar movement, the councils at Basel and Constance (in agreement with the earlier and Carthaginian Council and that at Hippo which limited papal authority) affirmed the superiority of councils to the papacy while Lateran II affirmed the opposite in elevating the papacy over councils. As these councils show incompatibility with one another, Lubbertus argues that they prove councils to be fallible. Moreover, some councils made determinations which are at odds with the Scriptures (according to

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135 Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 164-165.

136 Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 157-158.

137 Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 163-184. This is chapter 7 of book 4 in the treatise.

138 Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 178-181.

139 Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 181-182.

140 See the similar line of argument in *De Principiis*, 511.
the prevalent interpretations of Protestants in the late sixteenth century), which is yet another demonstration of conciliar fallibility. He points to the examples of when military service was forbidden for Christian church members, marriage was forbidden for clergy, concubinage was approved for priests, and baptism was permitted for heretics.141

Therefore, Lubbertus is not at all persuaded through Bellarmine's assertions about the infallibility of church councils approved by the pope. Using the tools of scholastic rhetoric and polemical presentation—exegesis, historical precedent, testimony of the fathers, logical syllogism and rhetorical flourish, Lubbertus amasses a great deal of support for his view of the sole infallibility of Scripture alone in the context of the authority of church councils even while he attempts to dismantle the arguments in Bellarmine's *Disputationes* on this topic. Lubbertus asserts that the only way that the authority of Christ himself can be demonstrated in the church is through her submission to the Scripture, and so the authority of a general council is the very authority of Christ operating through the word of God.142 When it is not the word of God which is the grounds for a general council's authority, the only alternative is human tradition in one form or another. This was, he argues, what prevailed at Trent, and such human traditions were very intentionally used to oppose the doctrine of the Protestants since they could not be condemned simply through appeal to the Scriptures.143 In addition to having the support of Scripture for this understanding of church councils, Lubbertus also uses the testimony of the church fathers to refute the assertions of Bellarmine about the authority

141 Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 168-169, 169, 176, and 176.

142 Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 109.

143 Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 109-110.
of a church council approved by the papacy.\textsuperscript{144} Sometimes even simple logic applied through an analysis of his opponent's reasoning by use of syllogisms is a sufficient tool to help Lubbertus disprove the argument of the great Jesuit polemicist for the authority of church councils like that which took place at Trent and subsequently receive the pope's approval.\textsuperscript{145}

**Lubbertus' Survey of the History of Church Councils**

By comparing his comments about the various major church councils throughout history, one can detect the general pattern to Lubbertus' assessment of past councils. In contrast to Bellarmine, he affirms that "councils...can err, and often have erred" since the record of church councils presents some which he believes stood for biblical doctrine and others which Lubbertus finds to have departed from this plumb line of infallibility.\textsuperscript{146}

The Jerusalem Council of course is the archetype of what such a gathering should be, and so he offers only a positive assessment of this council—following, of course, the positive assessment of the Jerusalem Council in the New Testament Scriptures themselves. The subsequent biblical narrative presents it as a gathering of godly men who stood for the defense of the Gospel through the leading of the Holy Spirit when orthodox doctrine was under attack from various quarters. Lubbertus points out that there was no pope or any other single individual who dared to call for the council on his own authority in the primitive church—a fact which he happily cites as a challenge to the right

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\textsuperscript{144} Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 146-148.

\textsuperscript{145} Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 148-151.

\textsuperscript{146} "Concilia...posse errare, et saepe errasse." Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 127.
of the pope alone to call a council. As to the delegations who were present, Lubbertus emphasizes the explicit record of Acts that elders (presbyters) were in attendance as well as ministers (bishops). For Lubbertus, this ought to have set the precedent for all subsequent church councils and synods which would be received as legitimate and trustworthy throughout the remainder of church history.

During the time of the early church, Lubbertus tends to continue with a rather positive assessment insofar as the early ecumenical councils affirmed orthodoxy on essential doctrines even from the standpoint of the Protestants. In articulating the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, Nicaea is the great and monumental council which stood for biblical orthodoxy after the apostolic age. Lubbertus also thinks that the procedural characteristics of Nicaea are also normative for subsequent church councils. Just as the Emperor Constantine assumed the authority to call for a church council at Nicea in the absence of the ability among all the bishops to do this (and then Emperor Theodosius did the same for the Council at Ephesus some time later), Lubbertus approvingly describes the proper place of the civil magistrate in guarding the welfare of the church by divine appointment since the time of Nicaea. Indeed, Constantine not only called for the council but (here Lubbertus follows a few select patristic accounts of the event) he also

147 Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 30. He argues that the calling of the Jerusalem Council was through the agreement of all the bishops of that time. *De Conciliis*, 33-34.


149 Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 34-35.
called for the attendance and participation of the laity\textsuperscript{150} according to Lubbertus.\textsuperscript{151} Lubbertus says that all of the evidence from patristic sources suggests that all of the delegates—even the bishop of Rome whom Bellarmine would identify as the "pope" at the time—accepted the role of the magistrate in the life of the church as it happened at Nicea through the role of Constantine.\textsuperscript{152} Essentially Lubbertus finds the Nicene Council to be the normative pattern for how to hold a church council after the age of the apostles in a situation where it is impossible for the orthodox bishops of the church to speak with a united voice and there is a Christian magistrate who might use civil authority to convene a council which is governed by Scripture alone as to its spiritual authority.

Following Nicaea Lubbertus is more sparing in giving unconditional praise of any single council during the early church. While he greatly approves of the doctrine affirmed by Chalcedon on the subject of Christology, the reference to Pope Leo as the "head" of that council (through imperial concession, he clarifies) is more problematic as a pattern for subsequent church councils.\textsuperscript{153} He surveys the rest of the early ecumenical councils such as those which were held at Ephesus and Constantinople to show a very mixed historical record about the varying degrees of leadership reflected by the pope, the

\textsuperscript{150} Lubbertus means those who are not bishops or even ministers. He is probably thinking of presbyters as a distinct office from bishops.

\textsuperscript{151} Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 51: "Ex his et similibus manifestum est Laicos interfuisse Conciliis, et habuisse in iis consultandi et statuendi potestatem. Et si quis omnia diligenter expendet, videbit Laicos etiam iudicandi partes in conciliiis habuisse."

\textsuperscript{152} He gives a lengthy account of this broad support for the emperor's leadership in order to show historically that the pope does not have the right to preside over a council in \textit{De Conciliis}, 80-91. He writes, "Ex his manifestum est Imperatorem de iure in ea re iudicasse, ac proinde Imperatorem in re Ecclesiastica iudicare posse." Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 91.

\textsuperscript{153} Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 191-192. Even if the pope is called the "head" of that assembly at Chalcedon, Lubbertus retorts that "head" can be used in a number of senses--not all to suggest superior authority or the necessary right to be the head at any future council.
emperor, and other respected or regionally significant bishops at each of these gatherings.\textsuperscript{154} As he works through the validity and orthodoxy of each successive ecumenical council, Lubbertus generally becomes increasingly more critical until he arrives at the medieval councils which strike him as hopelessly flawed in their concerns, their methods of asserting authority through the papacy and church tradition, and their objectionable conclusions to Protestants such as Lubbertus. The councils which took place at Florence, Pisa, and Trent seem to Lubbertus to be nothing more than "papist councils" given that neither the civil magistrate nor the bishops as a united voice had any significant part in the summons to the council or the effort to present an ecumenical voice for the church beyond the interests of the papacy. Among the church councils, these stand out as not only as fallible but as illegitimate and erring in doctrine.\textsuperscript{155}

In Lubbertus' judgment, Trent continues along the trajectory of having departed from biblical orthodoxy and biblical ecclesiology by failing to vindicate the doctrine of the Reformation and instead giving a robust defense of the position of the pope and Roman Catholic tradition. Since the pope called for the council and controlled its outcomes, it clearly denied a voice to pious and learned men (i.e., theologians who are not bishops) from among the laity though it would have been most appropriate. Even if

\textsuperscript{154} For this survey, see the appeal to historical details to offer refutation to Bellarmine's generalizations in \textit{De Conciliis}, 71-80, which is the fourth chapter of book two in this treatise.

\textsuperscript{155} Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 38. Much closer to the end of the treatise Lubbertus offers an explanation for why these more recent councils with greater control by the papacy are such a departure from biblical doctrine. Lubbertus, with some of his strongest polemical language, accuses the pope of either being an unbeliever (\textit{infidelis}) or having abandoned the faith (\textit{a fide deficere}). Either of these explanations would interfere in him faithfully representing "the norm and rule of the Christian faith (\textit{Christianae fidei normam et regulam}). Lubbertus, \textit{De Conciliis}, 220.
they had no vote, such pious and learned men should have been invited and given safe passage given the precedent of the Jerusalem Council and the nature of the controversy over the doctrine of the Reformation which had already receive public condemnation by the pope. Therefore, Lubbertus treats the Council of Trent as the clearest example of procedural problems in conflict with the pattern of biblical and patristic records for the earliest councils, and then, he goes on to add, it can also be dismissed as illegitimate and unbiblical based on its pronouncements which stand in conflict with God's word and the rulings of earlier councils which addressed some similar matters.

Yet, even in the aftermath of the Council of Trent, Lubbertus also draws attention to the efforts of Protestants during the sixteenth century—before, during and after Trent—to hold other provincial councils which were committed to the authority of God's word. Among these provincial gatherings were two he mentions held in Nuremberg (1524, 1543); three in Speyer (1526, 1529, and 1544); three in Regensburg (1532, 1541, and 1557); and two in Augsburg (1555, 1559). In his mind, these provincial church councils set the course for the possibility of a new general and ecumenical council in Lubbertus' own time which might be received with the same universal recognition as those of the early church. Lubbertus writes in a number of his treatises that a council

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156 Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 120.

157 Lubbertus, *De Principiis*, 511. There is also at least one example of a provincial council which he discusses in *De Conciliis* which is more of kind which reflects strong control of the papacy, must to Lubbertus' disapproval. He charges that when Pope Leo called the French council it was not sufficiently universal in its scope to be considered among the other general councils. Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 22.

158 Lubbertus, *De Conciliis*, 96. He could certainly have extended this list, but perhaps there was something about the ecumenical boundaries or the doctrinal pronouncements of these particular ones which led him to mention them specifically.
with a proper understanding of biblical ecclesiology might return to the early church's original commitment to God's word and good church, thus vindicating the biblical support for the Protestant Reformation over and against Trent and the Catholic theologians like Bellarmine.

**Historical Context: Conciliar Attempts in the 16th and 17th Centuries**

In hindsight, Lubbertus' writings upon church councils which sought a new ecumenical council in his own time to be received throughout all of Christendom to once and for all settle the dividing issues of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation according to the terms he as a Protestant wanted—*sola Scriptura*, elimination of Roman Catholic tradition's authority, restraint on the papacy, etc.—might seem a bit quaint.\(^{159}\) Given the rapid development of Protestant churches from the beginning of the Reformation through the time of confessionalization and then the subsequent half millennium of church history in which little if anything was accomplished in reconciling the two sides, Lubbertus' presentation strikes the modern reader as simply out of touch with one of the foundational realities of Christianity in the west which was already nearly a century in the making when he published *De Conciliis*.

However, despite the apparently unrealistic goal which Lubbertus seems to have in mind in *De Conciliis*, he was not the only one thinking about this goal even several generations after the Reformation. There were various efforts made to hold such a universally recognized general council in both the sixteenth century before he wrote and in the early seventeenth century following his treatise. Each of these assemblies had its

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\(^{159}\) Indeed, 'quaint' might not be a strong enough term. It seems an absurd proposition—particularly coming from someone as little known in our present day as Lubbertus.
own distinctive character in theological commitments (versus doctrinal flexibility), in Protestant-leaning sympathies (versus Roman-leaning sympathies), in the size and location of the geographic region it sought to represent (versus being universal in its representation), and in its successful outcomes through bridging divides (versus creating new antagonisms across confessional lines). But even with these dynamics in which they vary a great deal one from another, collectively they speak to mindset in the period from the Reformation to the Enlightenment in which many theologians expected that a new ecumenical council of universal significance was never far from being possible.

Whether attempts at a national council or something on a larger scale such as a general council, these efforts reflect the goal of many to reunite the church in some form involving Protestants and Roman Catholics however they might be able to arrive at common ground. National councils were often viewed as stepping stones which created a path for something international and more universal in the future.

The most significant early efforts took place in Augsburg in 1530, in Leipzig in 1539, and in Regensburg in 1541. All of these attempted to various degrees to reconcile Catholics and Protestants. Augsburg may have greater lasting significance for having produced a milestone Lutheran confession in a context which invited dialogue and debate

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160 The best surveys of the topic seem to be Donald Nugent's *Ecumenism in the Age of the Reformation: The Colloquy of Poissy* and Jill Raitt's *The Colloquy of Montbeliard: Religion and Politics in the Sixteenth Century*. There is also some value in Hermann Schüssler, *Georg Calixt: Theologie und Kirchenpolitik, eine Studie zur Ökumenizität des Luthertums* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1961), but it is most concerned with the seventeenth century context and it also seems to lack objectivity in its clear interest in advocating contemporary ecumenicism.

161 Nugent, 5.

162 Nugent, 7-8.

163 Maruyama, 42.
with the Reformed, but it was initially supported by Emperor Charles V and attended by both Philip Melanchthon and Johann Eck and a joint gathering of Catholics and Protestants. Accordingly, the discussions in Augsburg focused on the major divisions between Rome and those favoring the direction of the Reformation—the Lord's Supper, the sacrifice of the Mass, the permissibility of clerical marriage, and church polity.\textsuperscript{164} Leipzig, which was attended by Melanchthon and Bucer among others in 1539, had much more of a decidedly Protestant flavor, but it is nevertheless part of a pattern of efforts to hold councils of importance to the universal church.\textsuperscript{165} Just two years later, the Colloquy of Regensburg (or Ratisbon) in 1541 took place with greater emphasis upon resolving matters between Catholics and Protestants.\textsuperscript{166} It was called for by Emperor Charles V who desired greater unity in the church in light of international tensions, but the breadth of theological viewpoints is very telling: Melanchthon and Bucer again were participants; Calvin came as an observer; and Pope Paul III sent Gasparo Contarini as a representative. These talks brought some consensus on the doctrines of free will, original sin and justification, but the Lord's Supper and other areas of polity and discipline proved too difficult for agreement or compromise and could not be resolved at Regensburg.\textsuperscript{167}

The Council of Trent began in 1545, but—though it strongly condemned the Reformation's doctrine and those who professed it in Protestant churches—it also invited

\textsuperscript{164} Nugent, 8.

\textsuperscript{165} Nugent, 8.


\textsuperscript{167} Nugent, 9.
a new round of ecumenical discussions between Catholics and Protestants who were unhappy with the lack of a conciliatory spirit at Trent and sought what one historian describes as a "fresh start." This ultimately brought about the gathering of the Colloquy at Poissy (1561) as a kind of national council in France to resolve areas of disagreement between Catholics and Protestants in light of what was not going to happen through the Council of Trent.

Prior to the convening of Poissy, there was an ill-fated attempt at a colloquy at Worms in 1557, but the participants made little progress at this time. As the momentum for a national council in France continued to build, Pope Pius proposed various ways to have a general council instead in order to strengthen his position of leadership given what would likely happen in France where his control would not be as secure, but the issue of such an assembly's location was quite controversial and Pius soon had to relent to the opposition.

Around this time, no lesser figure than John Calvin was demanding a "free and universal" council to meet in the interests of all of Christendom to settle the doctrinal controversies dividing Protestants and Catholics in a way that it would not be monopolized by the papacy's position as it was clearly turning out in the Council of

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168 This is the phrase Nugent uses. See Nugent, 45-46.

169 Trent did not officially conclude until 1563.

170 Nugent, 9.

171 As Nugent presents it, Pope Pius was negotiating from a position of weakness in the few years before Poissy, and he vacillated between privately expressing willingness to have a general council in Germany and vehemently opposing this location due to the Protestant majority in that location. See Nugent, 43-47.
Trent. In this same document, Calvin expresses that such civil magistrates as princes have the right to call such a gathering at the national level if a general council could not be convened for this purpose at the present time.172

Meanwhile Emperor Ferdinand I (brother of Charles V, who had died) was also pushing for a general council with representatives from Protestant churches in a number of Protestant countries who would be guaranteed both safe passage and the privilege of addressing the assembly. He felt that the Council at Trent should be discontinued and some of the Tridentine decrees should either be revoked or altered. In the latter months of 1560, he was seeking support for a general council with both Protestant and Catholic delegates to meet in Innsbruck.173

Many different sides were therefore pushing for a general council even before Trent's Council was officially concluded.174 This is often forgotten in presenting the larger narratives of how the Reformation and Counter-Reformation developed throughout the course of the sixteenth century.

The Colloquy at Poissy was ultimately a national council held from September to October in 1561 which included major representatives of the Roman Catholic Church.175

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173 Nugent, 46-47.

174 See chapter two of Ecumenism in the Age of the Reformation, which gives a helpful overview of all major parties and their priorities in having a general or national council in the months which led up to the Colloquy at Poissy. Nugent, 37-67.

175 The representatives of Rome included the Cardinal of Ferrara Ippolito d'Este, 6 French cardinals, and 38 French bishops and archbishops.
important leaders from the Protestant/Huguenot\textsuperscript{176} church, and a number of moderates\textsuperscript{177} in a third faction who were more concerned with peace and unity in France and therefore more pragmatic on some doctrinal matters. France was so volatile from religious turmoil that all sides felt compelled to participate—even the Roman Catholics who might not have desired to attend if there was not so much to potentially lose as Protestants were making gains in many ways in France. The Protestants viewed Poissy as an alternative council to the Council of Trent which they found objectionable for many reasons. The official invitation to the colloquy indicated that ecclesiology and the doctrine of the sacraments would be the focus of the sessions, but both the Catholics and the Protestants took the assigned topic of ecclesiology to address wide ranging topics having to do with the authority of Scripture and its relationship to the church fathers and past church councils.\textsuperscript{178} Maruyama points out that, despite their differences which were not resolved during Poissy, all three of the parties in attendance were united in their desire to have greater stability in French church life through a restoration of the primitive church in France by following primitive sources—namely, Scripture and the church fathers.\textsuperscript{179}

\textsuperscript{176} The most noteworthy Protestant participants were Reformed theologians Theodore Beza and Peter Martyr Virmigli.

\textsuperscript{177} The moderates included Catherine de Medici (regent mother of the king), Michel de l'Hopital and Anthony of Navarre. The king of France, Charles IX, was in attendance, though only 11 years old at the time. On this moderate party, see Nugent, 23.

\textsuperscript{178} Maruyama, 40. Beza spoke at length over such things as the nature of the church, the marks of the church, the authority of the church, and the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. See Maruyama, 46-51. The Cardinal of Lorraine gave a response and refutation to Beza's speech in emphasizing a definition of the Catholic Church in which it is "the column and firmament of the truth," the meaning of the Scriptures as the "rule of faith" even as the Gospel and the church are prior to the Scripture, the infallible authority of church councils, and the doctrine of the Lord's Supper in which he rejects Beza's "errors." See Nugent, 109-110; Maruyama, 43.

\textsuperscript{179} Maruyama, 38.
While it was more regional in significance than universal for the whole church and while it failed to overcome some predictable doctrinal divides, Poissy still stands as a monument to the serious efforts which were being made to overcome doctrinal divisions between Catholics and Protestants for political reasons if not for reasons of church life as well.

The movement toward confessionalization continued in the years after Poissy among both traditions of the Protestants. The Reformed produced the Belgic Confession (1561), the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), and the Second Helvetic Confession (1562/1566)—all of which highlight their rejection of Roman Catholic doctrines as much as they positively articulated Reformed doctrine. The Formula of Concord (1577) and the Book of Concord (1580) did the same in laying out the boundaries of Lutheran theology. The production of creeds indeed shows growing maturity among all of the churches developing in independence from one another—Roman Catholic, Reformed and Lutheran.

Yet again, though, social and political interests pushed the need for ecumenical dialogue across these new confessional divides. In 1586 both Lutherans and Reformed theologians met for the Colloquy of Montbeliard in order to see if any progress might be made in bringing greater unity among at least the two sides of Protestants as they met in France but considered the implications for this need across northern Europe. While this was not an effort to bring harmony and agreement with Roman Catholics who were not even invited to participate, it is again a sign of the pressures and efforts to work against simple confessionalization in the church of each nation.

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By this same time, Bellarmine's *Disputationes* began to appear in print, and this triggered the prolific response of Protestant theologians like Lubbertus who sought to refute Bellarmine and the press for the rejection of Tridentine dogma. The Protestant apologists were utterly confident that—with Scripture and the best of the church fathers assumed to be on their side—the time was ripe for a truly catholic church council to meet which would actually reject Roman Catholic doctrine. This is why even in *De Principiis* (1591) Lubbertus demands a free council to meet in the German lands according to the terms which had been sought by major Protestant theologians and narrowly denied by the papacy and Roman Catholic magistrates for half a century. *De Conciliis* (1601) simply gives this call in an extended form as Lubbertus was able to write on the subject of church councils and the possibility for a modern ecumenical council in particular, but it speaks to an impulse known throughout the early period of Protestant Orthodoxy as the antecedents to Lubbertus and his own contemporaries demonstrate.

**Conclusion**

It is beyond the scope of this study to prove that there were any ecclesiastical gatherings which took place as a direct result of Lubbertus' treatises on ecclesiology and church councils.\(^{181}\) It is also unnecessary to point to specific theologians who embraced

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\(^{181}\) Besides the seventeenth century efforts detailed just below, the Arminian/Remonstrant controversy in the Netherlands is also worth considering as it moved from a classis level controversy in Amsterdam to the level of a national synod with international representation during the Synod of Dort (1618-1619). The synod settled a major issue of soteriology within the Dutch Reformed Church and provided further defense against doctrinal and philosophical influences which were associated with the Roman Catholic Church. While this is not an ecumenical council to resolve the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, it is another regional effort to settle doctrinal controversy of the period consistent with the ecclesiology found in *De Conciliis*. Sibrandus Lubbertus was present in Dortrecht for the synod, and his correspondence reflects a great deal of effort which he put into calling for a national synod in order to resolve
Lubbertus’ views and therefore continued to make the case that there should be a new ecumenical council in the early seventeenth century which might correct the errors of Trent and affirm Protestant doctrine based upon what Lubbertus and many others felt was the clear support of Scripture and the biblical interpretation among the best of the church fathers. It is sufficient to explain Lubbertus’ thought in its own intellectual and historical context, particularly as Lubbertus is a lesser known post-Reformation theologian who was writing against Bellarmine with interests and methods which were widely found in this period among Protestant theologians.

Nevertheless, while this study of Lubbertus does not intend to suggest direct causation between his treatise De Conciliis and any subsequent efforts at ecumenical councils in the following years nor a clear genealogy of ideas from Lubbertus to those who read him and in turn advocated similar positions, such efforts at church councils and such writings upon ecclesiology in sympathy with Lubbertus are both easily found into the seventeenth century. A few brief examples make this point in bringing conclusion to this overview on the subject of ecclesiology and conciliarism in Lubbertus’ writings.

Two contemporaries of Lubbertus (who were also among his friends through personal acquaintance and epistolary correspondence) wrote in great sympathy with the Franeker polemicist on the topics of ecclesiology and the need for church councils which reflect Protestant convictions about prolegomena. Franciscus Gomarus published a 1603


182 Again, van der Woude's study Sibrandus Lubbertus: Leven en Werken might be the best demonstration of this influence where it can be found based on Lubbertus’ extensive correspondence with his contemporaries, many of whom were theologians publishing their own treatises.
critique of papal infallibility and disputed the pope's exclusive right to call a council and lend it authority through his official approval. A decade later, David Pareus applied similar convictions in ecclesiology to the need he saw for a Protestant synod which might offer consensus on important doctrinal matters among the Reformed and Lutherans whom he thought to have a great deal in common. It is not clear how Pareus related the need for this gathering among just Protestants to the ongoing theological, social and political tensions between Catholics and Protestants, but his methodology for how a council ought to be held is very much in keeping with the emphases of Lubbertus' De Conciliis. It is not hard to see this as a friendly extension of the arguments which Lubbertus gave in refuting Bellarmine, again showing their importance for the time.

Another publication which was likely written in dialogue with Lubbertus' De Conciliis was Conrad Vorstius' Enchiridion controversiarum inter evangelicos & Pontifícios...ex IV Tomis Disputationum Rob. Bellarmini. Shortly after it appeared,

183 Franciscus Gomarus, Speculum verae ecclesiae Christi: quo pontificiorum errores a Francisco Costero...confitantur (Hanoviae: Guilielmum Antonium, 1603), 133-134.

184 David Pareus, Irenicum sive de Unione et Synodo Evangelicorum concilianda Liber Votivus, Paci Ecclesiae et desiderijs pacificorum dicatus (Heidelberg: Johannes Lancellotus, 1615). In this work, it is especially chapter 8 which addresses the breadth of those considered "orthodox" and their participation in the synod Pareus envisions. See Irenicum, 37-42. As for the requirements of this ecclesiastical assembly, they largely follow the parameters outlined by Lubbertus in De Conciliis: a "free" council, participation by clergy and laity, leadership by the highest civil magistrate in the land in calling for it, location in the region most directly concerced (he mentions a German city), the exclusion of papal prelates, representation of every region of the church, and the headship of Christ by the authority of his word in Scripture alone. Irenicum, 24-27. Pareus assembles an dialogue between the Catholic views of church councils in Irenicum, 173-174. One historian writes that in the period following sixteenth century confessionalization, David Pareus and Georg Calixtus represent the most significant attempts at reaching ecumenical unity for Protestants through their treatises and their support for church councils which reach across confessional boundaries. Christiaan de Jonge, De Irenische Ecclesiologie van Franciscus J Sunius (1545-1602) (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1980), 93.

185 Hanoviae: Guilielmum Antonium, 1610.
Lubbertus and Vorstius became embroiled in a very public controversy over the latter's appointment at Leiden, and this precipitated a new polemical exchange between them.\textsuperscript{186} But it is the thematic overlap in their treatises which suggests that Lubbertus had at least somewhat influenced Vorstius on the subject. Vorstius at one point enumerates the errors of the "papists" on the issue of church councils, and the objectionable parts to the Roman Catholic understanding of general councils is one which parallels what Lubbertus wrote. Vorstius decries the following parts to the Roman Catholic position on church councils: the council has authority only once it receives approval by the papacy; the pope (not the emperor) alone can call a council; the right to attend only belongs to Catholic bishops and prelates; the pope has charge to preside or appoint someone in his place; the council approved by the pope is infallible; and the pope is above the council rather than subject to its judgments.\textsuperscript{187} He was making the same refutation of Bellarmine which Lubbertus had offered a decade earlier.

Some aspects to the Protestant refutation of Bellarmine and the Council of Trent remained alive in post-Reformation dogmatics well beyond the time and influence of Lubbertus, including one point which was written by Franz Burmann in 1699, leaving it an open question as to whether or how Lubbertus' writings may have played a part in persuading later generations either directly or indirectly. Burmann lists the duties of the civil magistrate for the protection and furtherance of true religion, and it is remarkable for this subject of church councils that Burman writes in 1699 that the magistrate has the

\textsuperscript{186} This controversy is described in the introductory chapter above as a part of Lubbertus' biography.

\textsuperscript{187} Vorstius, \textit{Enchiridion}, 391-392.
"authority to call Synods to discuss ecclesiastical cases."

Given all of the problems of the magistrates involvement in church life by this point, it recalls the mindset of Lubbertus and his sixteenth century contemporaries when the problems of the magistrates direct role in defining orthodoxy was overshadowed by the need to have a civil power to call for a council when the papacy would be unresponsive to the interests of Protestants for doctrine and church life in pleading for such a council.

One of the more unique characters of church life in the seventeenth century was Georg Calixtus (1586-1656), the German Lutheran theologian who taught at the University of Helmstedt. His writings upon the need to articulate a unifying theology for Catholics, the Reformed, and Lutherans to all agree upon based on Scripture and the early church fathers met with great hostility on all sides, but he also succeeded in advocating for a series of ecumenical colloquies at Leipzig (1631), Thorn (1645), and (following his death) at Kassel (1661). Against the backdrop of Lubbertus' writings upon church councils and his call for a general and ecumenical council in the years following Trent which might receive more broad acceptance by Catholics and Protestants for truly representing the universal church with greater fidelity to Scripture and the writings of the church fathers which were agreeable to Protestants, Calixtus actually shows that this effort had some success later in the seventeenth century. In fairness, though, Calixtus

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189 Note that David Pareus also wrote that the best way to lawfully call together the assembly he calls his "Protestant Synod" is through the civil magistrate, who is given the role of protecting pure religion within his realm. *Irenicum*, 35-36. His argument follows much of the logic of Lubbertus' *De Conciliis*.

was probably not advocating identical theological positions as Lubbertus on ecclesiology so much as he was more successfully challenging the stalemate with Roman Catholicism in the years following Trent.¹⁹¹

Nevertheless, the influence and partial successes of Calixtus show that Lubbertus was doing more than employing polemical rhetoric when he wrote in the early seventeenth century about his hopes for a new church council free from the papacy's dominance and open to the participation of Protestant ministers and theologians for the sake of resolving long standing doctrinal divides in the post-Reformation period. He was articulating a hope which was alive and well in many quarters who it was never fully realized as he hoped.

Lubbertus' publication of *De Conciliiis* in 1601 was a continuation of his great polemical endeavor as a Reformed theologian—the full refutation of the Jesuit Robert Bellermine's *Disputationes* to vindicate Protestant doctrine as having not only the full support of God's word in Scripture but the more consistent support of the church fathers as well. By this treatise's more narrow focus on church councils, it not only highlights the surprising consensus of many Protestants upon a return to the use of church councils to resolve the great controversies of the Reformation era, but it also shows range of influences which are behind the colloquies, national synods, and attempted general councils in the post-Reformation period. Lubbertus condemns the assumptions behind the Council of Trent as well as its resulting decrees, but he writes with conviction in the hopes that a new ecumenical council might replace Trent to the satisfaction of those

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¹⁹¹ For an assessment of Calixtus’ ecclesiology, see Schüssler, 52-66.
Protestants who were not represented there due to the wishes of the papacy. This study has defended the position that Lubbertus called for a new council as an expression of biblical and catholic Christianity—not just as a cynical expression of rhetoric to criticize Rome in asking for the impossible.

Through a close analysis of Lubbertus' treatise, we have seen that his conciliar thought is very consistent with his doctrine of Scripture's unique infallibility and his doctrine of the church's unity and catholicity. In these ways, it is characteristically Protestant and consistent with both Lutheran and Reformed theologians from much earlier in the sixteenth century. Yet, he also reflects a pragmatic character which leverages the position of the civil magistrate to provide order and leadership across the Catholic-Protestant divide while diminishing the role of the papacy generally claimed by Roman Catholics in the Counter-Reformation movement.

All church councils should be free from the constraints of men to maintain peace and purity for the church of Jesus Christ, and Sibrandus Lubbertus sought through his De Conciliis to lay the foundation for such a free council to meet once again, just as the great ecumenical councils which met in the time of the early church.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

Sibrandus Lubbertus and Assessing Significance

This study on the theology of the post-Reformation scholastic dogmatician Sibrandus Lubbertus is narrowly focused on his polemical writings against the Jesuit controversialist, Robert Bellarmine. There are a number of other works written by Lubbertus which are significant for assessing his importance to post-Reformation historical theology, and his importance for church history surely goes beyond these treatises, given the respected institutions he helped to establish (a university and a regional church both in Friesland and Groningen) and the social upheaval connected to the Reformed church in the Netherlands during Lubbertus' tenure at Franeker. However, these additional aspects to his legacy are not the focus of this dissertation. Here Lubbertus is examined simply for his part in the published polemical response to Bellarmine and his *Controversies*.

This dissertation has argued that Lubbertus' writings are not necessarily full of entirely new doctrinal insights or original formulations, but they hold a great deal of historical significance as an example of the changes in post-Reformation Protestant theology during a stage of its development when, after the Council of Trent, polemics with Roman Catholics was taken up by a substantial number of Lutheran and Reformed scholastic theologians across northern Europe. As with many of the other great Protestant polemicists of that time, Lubbertus shows a great deal of refinement in
articulating orthodox (i.e., Protestant) doctrine and disputing the doctrine of his Roman Catholic opponents using the tools of scholasticism—namely, biblical exegesis, support from the church fathers and church history, philosophy, logic, philology, and rhetoric. Occasionally, he also does offer a surprising spin on standard Reformed doctrinal formulations in the course of his refutations of Bellarmine,¹ but his greater significance—which has been previously so poorly studied and parsed in the secondary literature of historical theology up until now—is primarily in his theological methods as an anti-Bellarmine polemicist who is representative of a stage of development for post-Reformation scholastic Protestant theology.

The assumption throughout this study of Lubbertus' writings against Bellarmine has been that it is unnecessary and unhelpful for the historian to cast judgment upon the polemical task itself, as though it is inherently uncharitable and unworthy of a Christian theologian's labors. So much of the past scholarship about Lubbertus or polemics has been distracted by this moral judgment. But this study argues that polemics was widely—almost universally—used as a genre of theological writings in the early seventeenth century among major theologians of every confessional tradition, and there was little or no negative association with polemics or those who wrote them.

Having put aside the bias against polemics, a study of several of Lubbertus' early treatises has revealed some noteworthy things for his theology and the doctrine of Protestant orthodoxy. Below, I outline some of those observations, particularly in the areas of theological prolegomena and ecclesiology, since these are the doctrinal areas of greatest concern in the four major works which Lubbertus wrote against Bellarmine. The

¹ I've tried to include a number of examples of this in the body of the dissertation.
issue of how Protestants viewed church councils is certainly interesting when viewed through the argument of Lubbertus' *De Conciliis*, and this deserves some final comments along with reflections about the broad topic of how a Reformed scholastic viewed authority in the church in relation to the word of God. Some attempt to outline areas where further research is needed will be given, and at the end of this conclusion I offer a reappraisal of Sibrandus Lubbertus as a post-Reformation theologian.

**Lubbertus and the Polemical Effort to Refute Bellarmine**

In the second chapter, this study presented the scope of the reaction to Bellarmine's *Controversies*. Over a century or more, scores of Reformed and Lutheran theologians wrote lengthy polemical responses to Robert Bellarmine, not only adding to the well-established tradition of Protestant polemicizing against Rome but also creating something of a new genre of Protestant dogmatics which would be characteristic of the early seventeenth century—the anti-Bellarmine polemic.

Lubbertus was one of the early Reformed apologists who published treatises to address the concern with the Jesuit apologist, and he therefore belongs on the short list of those who defined the genre. Despite the scorn heaped upon him by many church historians during the twentieth century, Lubbertus was respected and admired by his colleagues and contemporaries for his painstakingly thorough attention to the arguments presented by Bellarmine so that he might disprove them one-by-one in defense of Protestant doctrine, using the tools of scholastic theology—biblical exegesis, the fathers, logic, and rhetoric.
Some of the older scholarship\(^2\) has complained about the syllogistic forms which Lubbertus loved to use in dismantling the individual arguments of Bellarmine, but this is not an adequate description of Lubbertus' polemical style. He does use logical syllogisms in keeping with the Aristotelian assumptions which were universally accepted in his day, but beyond that is a lively form of theological rhetoric which shows great command of Scripture (especially in the original languages he often uses in citations) and a rather sophisticated way of appealing to the reader while rebuking Bellarmine or mocking his arguments. If he could find a way to suggest that Bellarmine was simply not proficient in his knowledge of the Scriptures, he would do it.\(^3\) If he could catch Bellarmine in mischaracterizing the strength of support from the early fathers for the Tridentine position when an equally convincing case could be made for the Protestant views from patristic sources, Lubbertus would do that too.\(^4\) If a logical fallacy might be found somewhere in the *Controversies*, Lubbertus liked to draw attention to it and perhaps suggest that this was a special "Jesuit logic" which Bellarmine was seeking foist upon his readers.\(^5\) We've already seen how he reclaims terminology associated with the Roman Catholics to apply to his own Protestant doctrine (for example, the terms "Catholic" or "Orthodox") for rhetorical purposes.\(^6\)

\(^2\) See especially van der Woude and Bergsma.

\(^3\) Cf. *De Conciliis*, 61: "Apaeigitur cum talibus nugis, et disce scripturam rectius...."

\(^4\) *De Conciliis*, 63. Indeed, Lubbertus at times seems to offer and exhaustive amount of detail about the church fathers and the events of the early church, always claiming the high ground of support from past ages of the church so as to mitigate against the Roman Catholic appeal to tradition.

\(^5\) *De Conciliis*, 28: "Atque haec est ista Jesuitica logica."

\(^6\) *De Conciliis*, 46.
In many different ways, the polemical style serves to demonstrate just how many theological disciplines and ancillary fields of knowledge were required to defend doctrine in the post-Reformation period. In the case of Lubbertus the polemical tone also provides a literary style of claiming legitimacy even when council councils or political events suggested the strength of the Roman church on the international stage when compared to the comparatively meager expression of strength for the Reformed Church as it was tucked away in remote regions like Friesland or in a small country like the Netherlands.

Granted that a funeral eulogy is not the most objective source for measuring a man's impact upon the world, it is still remarkable how Lubbertus' colleague on the theological faculty at Franeker, Sixtus Amama, could speak of Lubbertus at the time of his passing. He reminisced of the sorrow which Reformed theologians felt in the passing of the second generation of reformers, including the likes of Ursinus, Zanchi, Whitaker and Perkins. But now, Amama continues, they were witnessing the passing of the third generation of great reformers, including Pareus, Piscator, and Lubbertus. While he acknowledges the decades which Lubbertus spent refuting Bellarmine—recollecting, "It was his goal to burn the papist superstitions out of the hearts of men with the flame of truth..."—he also describes the debt owed to Lubbertus in the Dutch Reformed Church where his *Commentarius* on the Heidelberg Catechism was used by preachers across the land. By his accomplishments as a polemicist, Amama considered him among the illustrious theologians of the age, but there was also no contradiction in his standing as the teacher of earnest Christian piety by his volume on the catechism which was consulted for the ministry of pulpits all over the Netherlands each week.

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[7] See Sixtus Amama, *Sermo Funebris habitus post exequias Sibrandus Lubertus* (Franeker, 1625); also van der Woude, 573, 574, and 377-378.
Since this study is defending the legitimacy and respectability of the polemical genre during the post-Reformation period and Lubbertus certainly qualifies as one of those polemicists, it raises the question of how to evaluate the success of a polemicist. Was Lubbertus successful in this role of polemicizing against Bellarmine?

He wasn't successful in the sense of bringing Bellarmine to retract his writings or bringing about the collapse of the papacy. But he was successful in providing a voice of doctrinal clarity for the Reformed church, for the scholarly community of Protestant theologians, and for some of the Protestant leaning segments of society which provided continuity with the tradition he represented while addressing dilemmas and controversies related to the Counter-Reformation's recent advances. Van der Woude's biography chronicles how enthusiastically and widely he was appreciated for his polemical contribution, which certainly must be a sign of success for the task of theological polemics. Moreover, his anti-Bellarmine writings were successful in demonstrating shared convictions which were often evident between Lutherans and Reformed. With this greater unity with the Lutherans in mind, Lubbertus pursued a kind of idealized reconciliation among Protestants and Catholics upon a more biblically consistent platform of doctrine than he found in the decrees of the Council of Trent. The efforts to achieve greater unity among Protestants in the future following the time of Lubbertus' writings suggest Lubbertus and his likeminded Reformed contemporaries were effective in this end goal of polemics.
Lubbertus and the Doctrines of Ecclesiology and Church Councils

In refuting Bellarmine, Lubbertus was very mindful of how he stood in continuity with many other Protestant theologians before him, appealing to the standard two notes of the true church (faithful biblical doctrine and right administration of the sacraments) or the standard four characteristics to the church of Jesus Christ (unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolic origin) just as the Reformers did. He takes great pains to defend the church as both visible and invisible since this is denied by Bellarmine. He defines the church in continuity with earlier Reformed and Protestant theologians. He denies that the office of the papacy has any essential role for the universal church. Though Lubbertus was not giving new formulations of doctrine, he was giving a robust defense of the Protestant views dismissed by Bellarmine by claiming they were actually both supported by Scripture and by the church fathers. As Bellarmine so insists upon the infallibility of the church due to the infallibility of the pope, Lubbertus offers a lengthy explanation for how the church is always fallible in her own essential nature as the church militant. He presses the importance of insisting that, though the church is fallible, the word of God is infallible, and this is the way that the church can have certainly of true doctrine and confidence in her continuation in that doctrine despite the attack of the gates of hell.

This conviction of the infallible rule of Scripture given to the church is then applied to the issue of church councils, which Lubbertus claims to have immense importance to the universal church. The Christian Church can and should have councils to define true doctrine, but he locates the authority and certainty of any such assemblies with the unique infallibility of Scripture as it is rightly handled by those ministers, elders and teachers who are charged to meet as need requires in such a synod or general council.
On the topic of church councils, Lubbertus' polemical theology is far from merely
abstract because it has immediate application in the evaluation of what happened at Trent
as well as in the demand for new and "free" council which might give hearing to
orthodox (i.e., Protestant) teachers and decide controversies based on the Scriptures
alone. Lubbertus was aware that this ideal of a "free council" had been sought to resolve
the doctrinal division over the Reformation going back to Luther himself and with other
theologians since that time, but he demands it is more urgently needed and required in his
own day because of the failures of Trent as a departure from God's word as well as from
all standards of justice for those who were condemned at the Council. Lubbertus argues
that—beyond the biblical imperative that the church adhere to the word of God alone in
her doctrine—the civil magistrate is also entrusted with the care of true religion in his
realm, and so he calls for the magistrate to use his proper civil authority to call for a
council as assure its fairness in examining the doctrine which is at stake in the
Reformation and the Roman Church's opposing views.

Despite the contemporary associations with polemics as being divisive and
narrow, it is precisely in Lubbertus' polemical treatment of church councils that he seems
most ecumenical and broad in his ecclesiastical sympathies. He envisions a new church
council meeting which would bring together all of the orthodox segments of the church—
Reformed, Lutheran and Catholic—through agreement upon biblical doctrine and a
continuity with the best of the fathers. He had no expectation that the papacy would
approve of this proposal given the posture of the papacy in recent years, but he did
expect—with some good reasons which have been detailed above\(^8\)—that the emperor

\(^8\) Cf. chapter 5.
could yet call for such a church gathering which would have standing for the universal church, just as Constantine did for the Council of Nicaea. The chapter on council concluded with the historical reasons to think that Lubbertus' proposal was not as unrealistic as it may first sound.

Lubbertus and the Broader Issue of Authority in the Church

In the early modern period, spiritual authority was far more respected and feared than is generally the case in our modern secularized world. Accordingly, Sibrandus Lubbertus wrote in the conviction that God has granted spiritual authority to the church to pardon sins as well as to bind sins, but the question at stake in the controversy with Rome was concerning the form of that authority. Both the decrees of the Council of Trent and the Catholic polemicist Robert Bellarmine assume a spiritual power in the visible institutional church which originates in the Holy See in Rome and is expressed through infallible teaching of the pope and the sacramental ministry of local parishes in fellowship with the pope. Lubbertus is just as confident that Jesus Christ has granted spiritual authority to the church, but asserts that it resides entirely in the authority of God's Word which is biblically delegated to officers in the church in the form of the keys of the kingdom through preaching and the ministry of the sacraments.

This view of spiritual authority which Lubbertus expresses in his polemical writings is in continuity with the early Protestant slogan sola Scriptura, but it is also much more intentionally connected to the ministry of the visible church in the ways which Lubbertus gives refutation to the doctrine in Bellarmine's Controversies. This spiritual authority is expressed in the life of the Christian believer who receives the Word
of God, in the congregational ministry of the local church in which faithful ministers administer the keys of the kingdom, and in the larger assemblies of the visible church which show the infallible rule of Jesus Christ through consistent submission to Christ's Word. Lubbertus does not see any of these expressions of spiritual authority in conflict with any of the others, but they function in unison by the Holy Spirit's ministry in the church among God's people.

One of the results of what Lubbertus writes on the church and on the civil magistrate is that he views the state as having the divinely ordered role of assisting in the church in using her spiritual authority by protecting true religion in society and calling such larger assemblies as church councils when necessary. Nevertheless, Lubbertus also explicitly denies that the state has any authority of its own with respect to spiritual matters. This is one of the characteristics of early Protestantism which would be challenged and significantly altered through the time of the Enlightenment, but in Lubbertus the combined elevation of the state's responsibility for religion and the limitation upon the state's spiritual authority is quite pronounced.

**Areas for Further Study**

This dissertation touches upon a number of broad and narrow topics of post-Reformation theology which all are deserving of greater research and publication. The remainder of Lubbertus' works, for example, remain unexamined in historical scholarship, and many of these entail centrally important issues for the theology of the time—the orthodox response to Socinianism, Vorstianism, the controversies between Grotius and the orthodox Reformed, the development of church polities in the low
countries, and the use of commentaries upon the Heidelberg Catechism to bring stability to churches.

Another lens through which to view the legacy of Lubbertus is the often overlooked faculty of Franeker during its first century of history. Lubbertus, Ames, Maccovius, Cocceius, Drusius and a half dozen others were celebrated theologians in their day, and their writings say much about the diversity of doctrinal and hermeneutical emphases within the confessional bounds of the Dutch Reformed Church reaching from the time of the Arminius controversy up through the Nadre Reformatie and the Voetian/Cocceian conflicts.

Concerning the *loci* of dogmatics which were central to the polemics of Lubbertus against Bellarmine, the literature on prolegomena is limited and in need of expansion, but the research on ecclesiology is especially sparse given the fervency with which it was addressed by Lubbertus and many of his Reformed contemporaries. In light of the focus on anti-Bellarmine polemics as an emerging genre when Lubbertus was publishing his treatises, there is a great deal to be explored in how the Protestant refutation of Bellarmine used church fathers and historical precedent to garner support for the *Protestant* position, essentially claiming this aspect to tradition as well as Scripture to vindicate the Protestants' doctrinal positions though they lamented they were not even given a hearing at the Council of Trent.

In general, there is so much interesting and significant theology from the post-Reformation period which still yet to be examined in published scholarship. Each new topic, including this study of Lubbertus' polemical treatises against Bellarmine, reveals entire new directions to research the historical theology of the Reformed tradition. The
utter explosion of resources now readily available online also makes these subjects much more accessible as primary sources, giving hope for the gradual development of the secondarily literature as well.

**Reappraisal of Sibrandus Lubbertus as a Theologian**

Sibrandus Lubbertus is one of many great and influential Protestant theologians in the early seventeenth century, and this dissertation has sought to rescue him from the caricatures of the twentieth century secondary literature which was content to dismiss him as *merely a polemicist*. We have seen how not only *polemics* but *anti-Bellarmine polemics* was a growing genre of theology in the time of Lubbertus, suggesting that we can often do away with the pejorative aspects to the label "polemicist" just as it is more commonly acknowledged now that "scholastic" has no negative connotations for this era either.

Lubbertus demonstrates that not only can polemics be neutral as simply a genre of theology, it can even have a positive and ecumenical function. It was through refuting Bellarmine that Lubbertus sought to construct a way of pursuing ecumenicity for the universal church which would cross over the Protestant-Catholic confessional divide as well as the Reformed-Lutheran divide. Lubbertus was not the only one in the post-Reformation period who sought to alter the terms of how ecumenicity was expressed, but he is a good example an impulse following the time of confessionalization to reclaim what it means to simply be "catholic." 9 If there was anything which Lubbertus sought to

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9 Lubbertus often embraces this word, even rejecting the term "Calvinist" to describe him given that from his birth he has never sought to be anything other than a "Catholic" Christian. Van der Woude, 114-115.
show in his treatises against Bellarmine, it was that he is the true catholic when one compares his doctrine with that of the Roman Catholic Jesuit and Cardinal, Robert Bellarmine.

Given the obscurity of Sibrandus Lubbertus today, this study has presented him as an important post-Reformation theologian who deserves wider acknowledgement for his writings against Bellarmine as well as the ways he left an enduring mark upon the University of Franeker, the Dutch Reformed Church, and the theological landscape of Protestant Europe which reached even into the English speaking world.10 Through his polemical writings he helped contribute to the development of polemical expansions in the dogmatic volumes of later scholastics like Daniel Chamier, William Ames, Lucas Trelcatius, Johannes Hoornbeeck, Johannes Cocceius, Gisbertus Voetius, Peter van Maastricht, Herman Witsius, and Francis Turretin. As these later post-Reformation theologians gain more attention today, it should also draw attention to one of the writers who influenced them—an early theologian at the University of Franeker who spent forty years defending biblical orthodoxy and training pastors during the post-Reformation development of Reformed Protestantism in the Netherlands and far beyond.

Theses Related to Dissertation

1. To identify Sibrandus Lubbertus as a polemicist in the post-Reformation era is not a judgment on his character or a denigration of his importance as a theologian but rather an identification of the genre he primarily used for his theological writings.

2. The genre of theological polemics used by Sibrandus Lubbertus and other Reformed theologians in the post-Reformation era had a very constructive use in respect to exegetical work, dogmatic definitions, historical support, and pastoral theology for the ministry of the Gospel among God’s people.

3. Few theologians in the post-Reformation era had as much influence on Reformed theology as the Jesuit apologist Robert Bellarmine, who sought to refute all Protestant doctrine by his *Disputationes* and ultimately inspired several generations of Reformed and Protestant theologians to give robust defense to the Protestant system over and against the critiques of the Counter-Reformation. If he is called an “external factor” in the development of post-Reformation theology (as van Asselt has put it), his significance clearly overshadows most of the major *internal factors* during that same time due to the perception that Bellarmine had posed a monumental challenge to the Protestant cause.

4. Protestant theologians of the sixteenth and seventeenth century like Lubbertus believed they stood in continuity with the church fathers and the catholic church of all ages because of their commitment to *sola Scriptura*.

5. Sibrandus Lubbertus saw no conflict between the supreme authority of God’s word in Holy Scripture and the divine authority implicit in the church when she rightfully interprets that Scripture.

6. In post-Reformation Reformed theology of Sibrandus Lubbertus, the church is *fallible* in her interpretation of Scripture, and yet she makes *infallible* pronouncements on matters of essential doctrine which basing those upon Scripture’s authority.

7. Sibrandus Lubbertus held that there could yet be a completely ecumenical general council in his day (*circa* 1585-1625) to resolve the controversies between Catholics and Protestants, and his appeal for a “free council in the German lands” was not mere rhetorical posturing which demanded a concession from the papacy and the Catholics which he knew they would never make.
Theses Related to Course Work

8. Herman Witsius presents the Mosaic administration of the covenant of grace as a national covenant, which is not purely a covenant of grace nor purely a covenant of works but covenant which has aspects both of grace and works. This aspect to his thought is not identical with the covenant theology of Johannes Cocceius, but there is a significant flavor of Cocceian federalism to Witsius which is not purely Voetian in its theological emphases.

9. In An Exposition of the Prophecy of Hosea, Jeremiah Burroughs represents how the prophet Hosea’s strange family was interpreted in the period stretching from late medieval exegesis to seventeenth century post-Reformation biblical commentary among the Protestant Orthodox; within this broad agreement, though, there are a variety of ways in which the “literal sense” is functioning.

10. In Of the Redemption of Mankind, Jacob Kmedoncius illustrates the continuity between the fathers, the Reformers, and the time of Early Orthodoxy in holding to the doctrine of predestination precisely for its Christocentric emphasis upon personal faith and its pastoral value for Christians who doubt their salvation.

11. Casuistry—the approach to ethics advocated by William Perkins, William Ames, and Richard Baxter—is deserving of a modern recovery as it balances the ideal and the practical while being open to the principles of ethics rooted in divine command and the natural law.

12. William James’ landmark essay “The Will to Believe” adequately refutes W. K. Clifford’s thesis in “The Ethics of Belief” that nothing should be believed without “sufficient reason” by establishing that that Clifford’s rationalistic skepticism fails to see its own presuppositions and that indeed a person does have the right to believe that which is a genuine option and appealing to the will. James offers a helpful tool in Christian apologetics in showing how, philosophically speaking, the most formidable opponents to Christian faith in the modern world are “chock-full of some faith or other themselves” but they have willed what they believe.

13. From Augustine’s Confessions to Pascal’s Pensees to the experience of the contemporary individual amid crushing consumerism, diversions can be exposed for the folly that they are, and in this way they can actually arouse us in our wretchedness that we might seek some kind of abiding truth and happiness in God.

Theses Related to Personal Interest

14. Franeker’s was the greatest theological faculty of the early modern period and therefore perhaps the finest this world has seen since the time of the apostles, and yet the name is virtually unknown apart from a few published scholars and graduate students interested in post-Reformation Reformed theology.
15. Historical theology is not a replacement for systematic theology or pastoral ministry, but it is an essential component to good systematic theology and to effective contemporary Christian ministry.

16. The fact of common grace and redeeming grace explains how God is sovereign in each of the two kingdoms of Reformed theology, and the term “redeeming grace” is diluted and rendered contradictory when applied to matters of the common grace order in creation. There is no redeeming grace in natural science or the arts since that redemption is only known through the Gospel ministry. However, common grace endeavors are pleasing to God and useful for recognizing and supporting the advance of the redemptive kingdom of Jesus Christ which is eternal and therefore our greatest good.
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