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Church and Reform in Nicholas of Cusa's Brixen Sermons (1452-58), with Additional Reference to his Roman Reform Sermons and Reformatio Generalis (1459)

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CHURCH AND REFORM IN NICHOLAS OF CUSA'S BRIXEN SERMONS (1452–58), WITH ADDITIONAL REFERENCE TO HIS ROMAN REFORM SERMONS AND *REFORMATIO GENERALIS* (1459)

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For Christina

CONTENTS

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ABBREVIATIONS

DCC	*De concordantia catholica*
DDI	*De docta ignorantia*
h	Heidelberg *Opera Omnia*

ABSTRACT

Serina, Richard J. "Church and Reform in Nicholas of Cusa's Brixen Sermons (1452–58), with Additional Reference to His Roman Reform Sermons and *Reformatio Generalis* (1459)." Ph.D. diss., Concordia Seminary, 2014. 279 pp.

Nicholas of Cusa (1401–64) played a significant role in the conciliar movement during the Council of Basel (1431–49), but his defection to the papal cause has led many interpreters to marginalize his subsequent views on ecclesiology and church reform. The scholarship has generally regarded his later ecclesiology as strictly papalist and his later reform efforts as authoritarian. This study analyzes the concepts of church and reform he articulated in the course of 167 sermons preached during his residential episcopacy in the Tyrolese diocese of Brixen (1452–58), with additional reference to four reform sermons and a comprehensive reform proposal Cusanus composed while a resident cardinal in Rome in 1459. Employing the methodology of reform ideas pioneered by Gerhard Ladner as a key to analyzing images of reform in the sermons and underscoring the relationship between ecclesiology and reform, it juxtaposes the sermons with the official reform acts as a pastoral complement to the more legislative measures Cusanus took as bishop. While the exigencies of church administration in the fifteenth century necessitated an assertive disposition in service of reform, the sermons provided an avenue for the reforming bishop to work out a metaphysical basis for ecclesiology and church reform from the perspective of a speculative thinker.

The body of this study argues that the concepts of church and reform Cusanus deployed during his residential episcopacy evolve naturally when he encounters repeated obstacles to his jurisdiction and makes recourse to other theological and philosophical sources, above all the Dionysian hierarchies that shape his broader metaphysics and mystical theology. He will increasingly apply the Dionysian hierarchies to his understanding of both the church as a mystical body and personal reform as the imitation of Christ (*christiformitas*), thereby supplying him with the conceptual apparatus to articulate a view of church reform founded on the illumination mediated downward to the faithful through the ecclesiastical hierarchy that enables all subordinate ranks to ascend toward salvation through mystical union with Christ. He will then apply these Dionysian conceived views of church reform in visitation sermons to the religious of his diocese and in synodal sermons to the diocesan clergy. The ideas Cusanus develops over the course of his tenure at Brixen will come to their fullest expression in the reform sermons he preaches to the Roman clergy in 1459 and the reform proposal he sketches later that year. The resulting concepts of church and reform qualify significantly claims of Cusanus's narrow papalism and authoritarianism with a more nuanced view whereby he seeks to establish church reform on a broader metaphysical and mystical horizon.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Few thinkers represent the complexities of fifteenth-century European intellectual, political, and religious life quite like Nicholas of Cusa (1401–64). To use a phrase from his own philosophical vocabulary, he was a "coincidence of opposites" (*coincidentia oppositorum*): a canon lawyer and a humanist, a speculative philosopher and a residential bishop, a German prelate and a Roman cardinal, a heavily beneficed secular priest and an observant reformer of monastic houses, and most controversially an exponent of the conciliar theory and a defender of papal authority against the rump council at Basel. Cusanus, to use his Latinized name, was born to a middle class family by the name of Krebs in the German shipping town of Bernkastel-Kues, on the Mosel River.[1] He received education in Heidelberg, Padua, and Cologne, earning his doctorate in canon law and sitting under Dutch theologian Heymeric de Campo (1395–1460) and Paduan canonist Giuliano Cesarini (1398–1444) along the way, both of which would play significant roles in the coming conciliar controversy.[2] The young Cusanus turned down multiple

[1] The principal biographical sources on Cusanus are Henry Bett, *Nicholas of Cusa* (London: Methuen, 1932); Erich Meuthen, *Nicholas of Cusa: A Sketch for a Biography*, trans. David Crowder and Gerald Christianson (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010); Edmond Vansteenberghe, *Le Cardinal Nicolas de Cues (1401–1464): L'action—l'pensée* (Paris: H. Champion, 1920); and Morimichi Watanabe, *Nicholas of Cusa: A Companion to His Life and Times* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011). For a concise introduction, see Donald F. Duclow, "Life and Works," in *Introducing Nicholas of Cusa: A Guide to a Renaissance Man*, ed. Chistopher M. Bellitto, Thomas M. Izbicki, and Gerald Christianson (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), 25–56.

[2] On Cusanus and Campo (also known as Heinrich van de Velde), see Antony Black, *Council and Commune: The Conciliar Movement and Its Fifteenth-Century Heritage* (London: Burns and Oates, 1979), 58–84, and Eusebius Colomer, *Nikolaus von Kues und Raimund Llull aus Handschriften der Kueser Bibliothek* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1961), 39–46. On Cusanus and Cesarini, see Gerald Christianson, "Cardinal Cesarini and Cusa's 'Concordantia'," *Church History* 54 (1985): 7–19, and Gerald Christianson, "Cusanus, Cesarini, and the Crisis of Conciliarism," in *Conflict and Reconciliation: Perspectives on Nicholas of Cusa*, ed. Inigo Bocken (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2004), 91–103.

university appointments to serve in the court of Ulrich of Manderscheid (1400–38) at Trier, collecting numerous benefices in the process, beginning with a deanery at Koblenz.[3] Ulrich sent him to the nascent Council of Basel in 1432 to advocate for his benefactor's claim to the archbishopric of Trier, and though the case was lost the council members took note of Cusanus's acuity and soon drafted him into their ranks.[4] From 1432 to 1436, he served on the council's deputation for matters of faith, along the way drafting his conciliarist tome, *De concordantia catholica* (1434), before unexpectedly breaking with the council majority in 1436 and siding with Eugenius IV in his decision to transfer the council to Ferrara for reunion talks with the Greeks.[5] On board a ship headed from Constantinople to Ferrara with the Greek delegation, he had a mystical experience that would shape the course of his later metaphysical thought.[6] This break marked the beginning of a new career in service to four successive popes—Eugenius IV (1431–47), Nicholas V (1447–55), Calixtus III (1455–58), and Pius II (1458–64)—for which he would receive the sobriquet "Hercules of the Eugenians" from fellow conciliar defector and the future Pius II, Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini (1405–64). He would defend papal rights at various political assemblies and serve as papal envoy to Emperor Frederick III, helping negotiate the end of the conciliar contest. He was subsequently named cardinal in 1448, sent on a reform mission to Germany and the Netherlands as *legatus a latere* in 1451 and 1452, installed as residential

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[3] Erich Meuthen, "Die Pfründen des Cusanus," *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 2 (1962): 15–66.

[4] Erich Meuthen, *Das Trierer Schisma von 1430 auf dem Basler Konzil: Zur Lebensgeschichte des Nikolaus von Kues* (Münster: Verlag Aschendorff, 1964).

[5] On Cusanus and the transfer of the council to Ferrara, Morimichi Watanabe, "Nicholas of Cusa, the Council of Florence and the *Acceptatio* of Mainz (1439)," in *The Divine Life, Light, and Love: Euntes in mundum universum: Festschrift in Honour of Petro B.T. Bilaniuk*, ed. Renate Pillinger and Erich Renhart (Graz, Austria: Andreas Schnider Verlags-Atelier, 1992), 137–47.

[6] H. Lawrence Bond, "Nicholas of Cusa from Constantinople to 'Learned Ignorance': The Historical Matrix for the Formation of *De docta ignorantia*," in *Nicholas of Cusa on Christ and the Church*, ed. Gerald Christianson, Thomas M. Izbicki (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 135–63.

bishop of the Tyrolese diocese of Brixen in 1452, and finally recalled to Rome in 1458 to serve in the curia of Pius II, who charged him with governing the temporal affairs of the Papal States and reforming the city churches in Rome during the pope's absence to gain support for a crusade. Despite these various ecclesopolitical commitments, the once precocious canonist became a prolific author on topics ranging from metaphysics and mysticism to mathematics and astronomy, most famous of his writings being the 1439 speculative treatise *De docta ignorantia.*

Research on Cusanus's ecclesiology has been restricted almost exclusively, however, to the early conciliar phase and his dubious conversion to the papal cause—and with good reason. *De concordantia catholica* is the clearest articulation of late medieval conciliar theory and retains its place among the most significant ecclesiopolitical treatises of the period. Scholars have described it as "at once a prophecy and epilogue" of constitutional theory (Figgis), the "synthesis and apogee" of the conciliar movement (Alberigo), a "whole ecclesiological and political theory" constructed from the medieval notions of representation (Tierney), and "a constitutional theology of the church and a general theory of politics" (Black).[7] These accolades, though, come at a price. If Cusanus's early conciliarism provides the standard by which his ecclesiological thought is judged, then his later papal thought becomes its exact obverse. The corporatist, egalitarian readings of the conciliar period give way to authoritarian, hierarchical caprice. Cusanus is said to be "an ideologist of papal monarchy" (Black), an "exponent of papal monarchy" who opted for the "imposition of authoritarian command" (Sigmund), one who supported a "papal absolutism whilst theorizing over the monarchial power of the papacy" (Prodi) and "worked to rehabilitate a

[7] John Neville Figgis, *Political Thought from Gerson to Grotius: 1414–1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907), 59; Giuseppe Alberigo, *Chiesa Conciliare: Identità e significato del conciliarismo* (Brescia: Paideia Editrice, 1981), 291; Brian Tierney, *Religion, Law, and the Growth of Constitutional Thought, 1150–1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 42; and Antony Black, *Political Thought in Europe, 1240–1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 178.

*pre*conciliar concept of the papacy" that "harked back to the papal monarchy of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries" (Ozment) or whose "assertion of overlordship" was "fully in keeping with the hierarchical conception of government in the church" (Stieber).[8] Studies of Cusanus's later reform efforts corroborate this same basic image. His reforms merely "invoked doctrinal considerations and the ascetic principles sanctioned by the church" and reflected the "obtuseness of his political practice" (Jaspers), he ceased to be the "dynamic and passionately devoted apostle of loving reform that he showed himself in his books" and instead "became the rule-maker, the threatener, the devious schemer with foreign powers, the wielder of ecclesiastical censure" (Tillinghast), and he was unable "to translate reform theory into practice, to bridge the gap between theological and pastoral components of the reform problem" (Sullivan).[9] This image furthermore spills over into the interpretation of Cusanus's later preaching, where he "inculcates the need for obedience and for conformity to the rules for one's state in life" and "enjoins upon the members of the laity obedience to their prelates with extraordinary rigor" (O'Malley), while his "tone becomes harsher" and "obedience becomes an ever present, dominant theme" (Herold).[10]

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[8] Black, *Political Thought in Europe*, 179; Paul E. Sigmund, *Nicholas of Cusa and Medieval Political Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 280, 295; Paolo Prodi, *The Papal Prince: One Body and Two Souls: The Papal Monarchy and Early Modern Europe*, trans. by Susan Haskins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 15; Steven A. Ozment, *The Age of Reform, 1250–1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 178; and Joachim W. Stieber, "The 'Hercules of the Eugenians' at the Crossroads: Nicholas of Cusa's Decision for the Pope and against the Council in 1436/1437—Theological, Political, and Social Aspects," in *Nicholas of Cusa: In Search of God and Wisdom*, ed. Gerald Christianson and Thomas Izbicki (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), 249.

[9] Karl Jaspers, *The Great Philosophers*, 3 vols., ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1966), 1:238, 242; Pardon E. Tillinghast, "Nicholas of Cusa vs. Sigmund of Habsburg: An Attempt at Post-Conciliar Church Reform," *Church History* 36 (1967), 390; and Donald Sullivan, "Nicholas of Cusa as Reformer: The Papal Legation to the Germanies, 1451-1452," *Medieval Studies* 36 (1974), 421, 426.

[10] John O'Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome: Rhetoric, Doctrine, and Reform in the Sacred Orators of the Papal Court, c. 1450–1521* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1979), 98, 232, and Norbert Herold, "'...als ob im Gehorsam die Freiheit zurgrunde ginge...': Die 'Doctrinae oboedientiae' in den Predigten des Nikolaus von Kues," *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 31 (2006), 176.

The literature on Cusanus's concepts of church and reform with but few exceptions has taken as its starting point the normative nature of his earlier conciliarism and judged his later ecclesiology and reform attempts in contrast with it, producing what amounts to a bipolar Cusanus: one an unqualified conciliarist with an unqualified corporatist, egalitarian ecclesiology that sought reform through constitutional measures, the other an unqualified papalist with an unqualified hierocratic, monarchical papalism that sought reform through authoritarian means. This study will augment that picture through recourse to a body of literature typically thought to buttress such a polarity: the sermons of the residential Brixen episcopate. The sermons Cusanus preaches to the laity in his Brixen cathedral, to the religious in his episcopal visitation of monastic houses, and to the regular and secular clergy of his diocese in clerical synods evince a natural evolution in his concepts of church and reform and lead to the notably transparent reforms of the papacy, curia, and Roman basilica clergy he proposes in 1459. They display a highly fluid and pastoral approach to church reform that complements the more hierarchical mechanisms he uses in the reform of the diocese and will shed light on the fundamentally mystical character of his hierarchical conception of the church and the christological shape of his reforms. By way of introduction, the present chapter will survey three areas of Cusanus literature pertinent to these concerns—ecclesiology in the later Cusanus, reform in the later Cusanus, and ecclesiology and reform in the Brixen sermons—before establishing some methodological considerations and previewing the course of the study.

Ecclesiology in the Later Cusanus

The study of Cusanus's ecclesiology has revolved over the last century around the *De concordantia catholica*. Cusanus did not include the conciliar treatise in the collected works he edited himself, but scholarship on it began in earnest after World War II, chiefly following the

publication of the critical edition between 1959 and 1965.[11] The principle interest surrounds the nature of his conversion from the conciliar majority at Basel to the papal minority supporting Eugenius IV.[12] Most interpreters describe his change of affiliation as a question of either continuity or discontinuity, and thus frame his later ecclesiology as either a contrast with or evolution from the earlier conciliar position.[13] The more comprehensive treatments of Cusanus's ecclesiology, however, have tended to avoid a simplistic continuity-discontinuity motif. Moreover, they embody interweaving but distinct lines of interpretation and reflect differing academic orientations and disciplinary horizons in their own right.

The first such treatment, composed as a dissertation in 1950 for the philosophy faculty at the University of Bonn and published in 1958, was Gerd Heinz-Mohr's *Unitas Christiana.*[14] This study sought to contravene Ernst Cassirer's understanding of Cusanus and by extension Renaissance humanism as a harbinger of modernity.[15] Beginning with Jacob Burckhardt's

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[11] The critical edition is found in volume 15 of the Heidelberg edition of Nicholas of Cusa's *Opera Omnia*, 22 vols. (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1932–2005). *Opera Omnia* hereafter *h*.

[12] The most extensive studies of these ecclesiopolitical conflicts and maneuvers are Joachim Stieber, *Pope Eugenius IV, the Council of Basel, and the Secular and Ecclesiastical Authorities in the Empire: The Conflict over Supreme Authority in the Church* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978) and more recently Michiel Decaluwe, *A Successful Defeat: Eugene IV's Struggle with the Council of Basel for Ultimate Authority in the Church, 1431–1449* (Bruxelles: Institut Historique Belge de Roma, 2009).

[13] For representative statements of continuity, see Remigius Bäumer, *Nachwirkungen des konziliaren Gedankens in der Theologie und Kanonistik des frühen 16.Jarhunderts* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1971), 187–89; Scott H. Hendrix, "Nicholas of Cusa's Ecclesiology between Reform and Reformation," in *Nicholas of Cusa on Christ and the Church*, 107–26; Peter McDermott, "Nicholas of Cusa: Continuity and Conciliation at the Council of Basel," *Church History* 67 (1998): 254–73; and Erich Meuthen, "Nikolaus von Kues in der Entscheidung zwischen Konzil und Papst," *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 9 (1971): 19–33. For discontinuity, see James E. Biechler, "Nicholas of Cusa and the End of the Conciliar Movement: A Humanist Crisis of Identity," *Church History* 44 (1975): 5–21; Werner Krämer, *Konsens und Rezeption: Verfassungsprinzipien der Kirche im Basler Konziliarismus* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1980), 283–92; and Stieber, "Hercules of the Eugenians," 221–55.

[14] Gerd Heinz-Mohr, *Unitas Christiana: Studien zur Gesellschaftsidee des Nikolaus von Kues* (Trier: Paulinus-Verlag, 1958).

[15] Ernst Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, trans. Mario Domandi (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963). The Burckhardtian view was articulated in Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. Samuel George Chetwynd Middlemore (New York: Macmillan, 1890). On Burckhardt's interpretation of the Renaissance, see Wallace K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in*

conception of the Italian Renaissance as the transition to the modern world, Cassirer had placed Cusanus's philosophical thought at the center of this transition, chiefly through his rejection of the medieval "hierarchical cosmos" and framing of philosophy on largely subjective rather than realist terms. Heinz-Mohr rejects this premise and sees in Cusanus an essentially medieval thinker, neither the proponent of a "naïve-idealistic optimism" nor a "forerunner of modernity."[16] What changes for Cusanus in his conversion to the Eugenian party is not the "general ecclesiology" he inherits from the West, in particular Pseudo-Dionysius, but rather the "special ecclesiology" pertinent to the exigent reform of pope, cardinalate, and council, and reshaped through the development of his metaphysical ideas. Heinz-Mohr then places Cusanus's later ecclesiology expressed in his sermons, letters, and reform attempts within this shifting metaphysical trajectory. He accents continuity rather than discontinuity, though it is a continuity following from his speculative thought and medieval views of hierarchy, not one taken on the terms of the later ecclesiological thought. A host of chiefly Germanic scholars subsequent to Heinz-Mohr have worked within this framework and sought to establish continuity in Cusanus's ecclesiology through recourse to his speculative metaphysics. Rudolf Haubst, Reinhold Weier, Claudia Lücking-Michel, Hans-Gerhard Senger, and Martin Thurner have all emphasized to various degrees the relative continuity of Cusanus's ecclesiology by placing it in the context of his philosophical development.[17] The primary shift occurs in his metaphysical language for

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Historical Thought (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1948), 179–252, at 218–20 for discussion of Cusanus in this connection.

[16] Heinz-Mohr, *Unitas Christiana*, 167.

[17] Rudolf Haubst, *Streifzüge in die cusanische Theologie* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1991); Reinhold Weier, "Christliche Existens und Kirchlichkeit als Kernproblem in den Briefen des Cusanus an die Hussiten," *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 13 (1978): 264–78; Weier, "Christus als 'Haupt' und 'Fundament' der Kirche," *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 21 (1994): 163–82; and Weier, "Der Glaube des Petrus – Ein Leitthema der Ekklesiologie des Nikolaus von Kues," *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 110 (2001): 267–79; Claudia Lücking-Michel, *Konkordanz und Konsens: Zur Gesellschaftstheorie in der Schrift "De concordantia catholica" des Nicolaus von Cues* (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1994); Claudia Lücking-

explicating the doctrine of the church, not necessarily the concept of the church itself. This brings into sharp relief the problem of discontinuity but does not address the later ecclesiological thought on its own terms or in relation to its ecclesiastical and political contexts.

A second comprehensive treatment of Cusanus's ecclesiology took a nearly opposite tack. Originally written as a political science dissertation at Harvard in 1959 and published in 1961, Paul Sigmund's *Nicholas of Cusa and Medieval Political Thought* sought to qualify the claims of some political historians that Cusanus's early conciliarism was a direct precursor of early modern constitutionalism. In his 1900 Birkbeck Lectures, J.N. Figgis had stretched constitutional ideas back to conciliarism and identified Cusanus as the apotheosis of that conciliar theory.[18] Sigmund, however, saw in *De concordantia catholica* a distinctly medieval expression of political thought that brought together the "hierarchical theories of Christian Neo-Platonism" and the "equalitarian theories" of Roman law—rediscovered in the eleventh century—and canon law.[19] In this view, Cusanus was able to hold the two in tension through the notion of *concordantia*, where the hierarchically ordered church included a variety of diverse members and functions, all tenuously balanced by political notions of consent and representation, and remained a final statement of the medieval social order rather than a herald of democratic

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Michel,"Zur Gesellschaftstheorie des Nikolaus von Kues: Von der concordantia zur coincidentia," *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 22 (1995): 3–54; Hans Gerhard Senger, "Der koinzidentelle Kirchenbegriff des Nikolaus von Kues," in *Coincidencia de opuestos y concordia: los caminos del pensamiento en Nicolás de Cusa*, ed. Mariano Alvarez-Gómez and João Maria André (Salamanca: Sociedad Castellano-Leonesa de Filosofia, 2002), 85–106; Martin Thurner, "Das Kirchenbild in dem Sermones des Nikolaus von Kues: Hilfe auch für Heute?" *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 31 (2006): 137–66; and Martin Thurner, "Kirche als 'congregatio multorum in uno' nach Nikolaus von Kues: Versuch einer transzendentalphilosophischen Deduktion," in *Für euch Bischof, mit euch Christ: Festschrift für Friedrich Kardinal Wetter zum siebzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. Peter Neuner and Manfred Weitlauff (St. Ottilien, Germany: Eos Verlag, 1998), 485–510.

[18] Figgis, *Political Thought from Gerson to Grotius*, 58–61. See also R.W. and A.J. Carlyle, *A History of Medieval Political Theory in the West*, 6 vols. (Edinburgh and London: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1903–36), 6:136–37, 169–71.

[19] Sigmund, *Nicholas of Cusa and Medieval Political Thought*, 8.

theories to come. The shift from conciliarism to papalism occurs only when this fragile balance collapses and Cusanus opts for hierarchy over equality. The later ecclesiology for Sigmund, then, is essentially discontinuous with the earlier ecclesiology, not in the sense that it is more or less either medieval or modern, but that it diminishes the medieval constitutional ideas in favor of the equally medieval hierarchical ideas. The result is a thoroughgoing advocacy of hierocratic political thought that expresses itself in both papal monarchicalism and authoritarian reforms. Unlike Heinz-Mohr, Sigmund develops this progression historically rather than topically, which only serves to place the later ecclesiology in more direct and unequivocal contrast to the earlier ecclesiology.

This thread of discontinuity has come to dominate much of the Anglo-American interpretation of Cusanus as a late medieval constitutionalist thinker. Sigmund has nuanced the claims in many of his subsequent writings, drawing a sharper demarcation between the medieval and conciliar elements of Cusanus's thought and reducing the distinction between the latter and early modern democratic notions.[20] Along with him, Anglophone scholarship has plotted Cusanus on a line in the development of constitutional thought running from the twelfth-century canonists to modern political thinkers. Brian Tierney, Francis Oakley, and Antony Black have positioned Cusanus within this trajectory and highlighted the contributions of his conciliar ecclesiology to early modern political thought.[21] In their view, Cusanus's early conciliarism

[20] Paul E. Sigmund, "Cusanus' *Concordantia*: A Re-Interpretation," in *Political Studies* 10 (1962): 180–97; Sigmund, "Das Fortleben des Nikolaus von Kues in Geschichte des politische Denkens," *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 7 (1969): 120–28; Sigmund, "Medieval and Modern Constitutionalism: Nicholas of Cusa and John Locke," in *Cusanus: The Legacy of Learned Ignorance*, ed. Peter J. Casarella (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 196–209; and Sigmund, "Nicholas of Cusa on the Constitution of the Church," in *Nicholas of Cusa on Christ and the Church*, 127–34.

[21] For their positions on Cusanus, see Brian Tierney, *Religion, Law, and the Growth of Constitutional Thought*, 66–71; Brian Tierney, "The Idea of Representation in the Medieval Councils of the West," *Concilium* 187 (1983): 25–30; Francis Oakley, "Conciliar Theory," in *The Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. Joseph Strayer (New York: Charles Scribner, 1983), 510–25; Francis Oakley, "Natural Law, the *Corpus Mysticum*, and Consent in Conciliar Thought from John of Paris to Matthias Ugonius," *Speculum* 56 (1981): 786–810; Antony Black, "The Conciliar

again is normative for his ecclesiology and represents an inchoate form of early modern constituationalism, while his post-concilar ecclesiology receives the epithet of papalism or is summarily ignored.[22] In contrast to them, Constantin Fasolt and Cary Nederman more recently have built on Quentin Skinner's rejection of political thought as a locus for the history of ideas and argued instead that Cusanus, like the rest of late medieval political thinkers, was pragmatic and resistant to codification.[23] This debate is a localized expression of a broader disagreement about the interpretation of political ideas and less so of Cusanus's own ecclesiology. On either side of that debate, however, his ecclesiology is reduced to its conciliar contribution to the history of political thought, and thus to a narrow focus on *De concordantia catholica*. The later ecclesiology at best serves as a contrast with the earlier conciliar thought.

A third interpretation of Cusanus's ecclesiology, ironically, positions itself against Sigmund on the basis of Tierney's own historical account of the origins of the conciliar

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Movement," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Theory, c. 350–c. 1450*, ed. J.H. Burns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 582–85; and Black, *Political Thought in Europe*, 178–83. For statements of their larger project, see Antony Black, *Monarchy and Community: Political Ideas in the Later Conciliar Controversy, 1430–1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); Francis Oakley, "'Anxieties of Influence': Skinner, Figgis, Conciliarism and Early Modern Constitutionalism," *Past and Present* 151 (1996): 60–110; Oakley, "Figgis, Constance, and the Divines of Paris," *American Historical Review* 75 (1969): 369–86; and Oakley, "Legitimation by Consent: The Question of the Medieval Roots," *Viator* 14 (1983): 303–35; and Brian Tierney, "Medieval Canon Law and Western Constitutionalism," *Catholic Historical Review* 52 (1966): 1–17.

[22] Both Black and Oakley have offered subtle qualifiations of their positions in later essays. See Antony Black, "Political Languages in Medieval Europe," in *Church and Sovereignty, c. 590–1918: Essays in Honour of Michael Wilks*, ed. Diana Wood (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 313–28, and Francis Oakley, "Introduction," in *Concord and Reform: Nicholas of Cusa and Legal and Political Thought in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Gerald Christianson and Thomas M. Izbicki (Aldersgate, UK: Variorum, 2001), xix–xxv.

[23] Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* 8 (1969): 3–53; Quentin Skinner, "Introduction: The Return of Grand Theory," in *The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences*, ed. Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1–20; Constantin Fasolt, *Council and Hierarchy: The Political Thought of William Durant the Younger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 315–20; Constantin Fasolt, "William Durant the Younger and Conciliar Theory," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 58 (1997): 385–402; Cary J. Nederman, "Conciliarism and Constitutionalism: Jean Gerson and Medieval Political Thought," *History of European Ideas* 12 (1990): 189–209; and Cary J. Nederman, "Constititutionalism—Medieval and Modern: Against Neo-Figgisite Orthodoxy (Again)," *History of Political Thought* 17 (1996): 179–94. Oakley responds to Nederman's criticisms in Francis Oakley, "Nederman, Gerson, Conciliar Theory, and Constitutionalism: *Sed Contra*," *History of Political Thought* 16 (1995): 1–19.

movement. Composed as a dissertation in political science at Columbia in 1961 and published in 1963, Morimichi Watanabe's *The Political Ideas of Nicholas of Cusa* is far narrower in scope than either Heinz-Mohr or Sigmund.[24] Focusing on the legal and political ideas of the *De concordantia catholica* against the backdrop of Tierney's research into the origins of conciliar theory, Watanabe argues that Sigmund does not give sufficient attention to the ecclesiological considerations pervading the work and serving as a hierarchical basis for the purportedly egalitarian political ideas.[25] Like Sigmund and Heinz-Mohr, he sees in Cusanus an unquestionably medieval thinker, but subordinates the specific conciliar and ecclesiastical elements of his ecclesiology to the hierarchical, Dionysian ecclesiology foundational for any practical ecclesiopolitical applications. The legal and political ideas he enunciates, like the canonists before him, are ecclesiological concepts with ecclesiological import rather than primarily constitutional concepts adumbrating their modern democratic import. While Watanabe sketches the development of these ideas in later writings, his study largely restricts itself to the early conciliar writings and does not offer a substantial reason for the conversion to the papal cause other than to claim Cusanus's motives were inscrutable and that he found the *concordantia* he sought not in the council, but in the papacy. Consequently, though his historical study of Cusanus's ecclesiology on its own ecclesiological terms improved on the interpretations of Heinz-Mohr and Sigmind, it stopped short of addresing the later ecclesiology with the same attention.

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[24] Morimichi Watanabe, *The Political Ideas of Nicholas of Cusa, with Special Reference to His "De Concordantia Catholica"* (Geneva: Droz, 1963).

[25] Brian Tierney, *Foundations of the Conciliar Theory: The Contribution of the Medieval Canonists from Gratian to the Great Schism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955). For a criticism of Tierney, see Hermann Josef Sieben, *Die Konzilidee des lateinischen Mittelalters (847–1378)* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1984), 316–65. A defense of Tierney's thesis against Sieben is Francis Oakley, "Verius est licet difficilius: Tierney's Foundations of the Conciliar Theory after Forty Years," in *Nicholas of Cusa on Christ and the Church*, 15–34.

Watanabe would eventually offer an answer to the question of Cusanus's conversion and, by extension, to the nature of his later ecclesiology. In what one commentator refers to as a "watershed moment" in Cusanus studies, Watanabe argued that the conversion to the papal cause was an ecclesiological response to an ecclesiological problem.[26] The tension for Cusanus did not exist between conciliarism and papalism, but between the concepts of authority over the church and consent from within the church. When consent failed to produce *concordantia* within the church, in fact creating more dissent in the case of Basel, the young canonist "accepted authority in exchange for consent as the guiding principle of church government" and switched allegiance to the papacy.[27] For Watanabe, the conversion to papalism and Cusanus's subsequent ecclesiology was neither express continuity nor express discontinuity, but a progressive development within his thought that opted for one aspect of his earlier ecclesiology over another. Rather than explaining away discontinuity with recourse to broader metaphysical speculations or asserting a discontinuity pitting Cusanus's papalism against his conciliarism, he instead posits ecclesiological change within continuity.[28] This way of framing the question suggests a more fruitful path to analyze ecclesiology in the later Cusanus. Instead of contrasting the later papalist ecclesiology with his earlier conciliar theory, it is best to look at the ecclesiological arguments in their own ecclesiastical context.[29]

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[26] Morimichi Watanabe, "Authority and Consent in Church Government: Panormitanus, Aeneas Sylvius, Cusanus," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 33 (1970): 217–36. For the essay as a "watershed," see Christianson, "Cusanus, Cesarini, and the Crisis of Conciliarism," 91.

[27] Watanabe, "Authority and Consent," 218.

[28] Cf. Sigmund, *Nicholas of Cusa and Medieval Political Thought*, 244–80. Watanabe's view is primarily distinct from Sigmund's in that, while Watanabe emphasizes the particular exigency of a decision created by the ecclesiological crisis at Basel, Sigmund sees it as Cusanus summarily changing his earlier medieval constitutional views.

[29] To this end, Watanabe focused much of his subsequent work on Cusanus's legal and political ideas in the context of his legatine, episcopal, and curial periods. Many of these essays are collected in Watanabe, *Concord and Reform*, but see also Watanabe, "Political and Legal Ideas," in *Introducing Nicholas of Cusa*, 141–65.

Two scholars of late have followed Watanabe in his general attempt to understand the later ecclesiology in both continuity and discontinuity with the earlier ecclesiology. Thomas Izbicki, a student of Brian Tierney's, has helped to clarify Watanabe's account and balance it with those of Heinz-Mohr and Sigmund. In several articles, Izbicki has suggested that the later ecclesiology emerges belatedly from Cusanus's own metaphysical insights and becomes a means for explaining his papalism in speculative terms.[30] He argues that, while advocating for Eugenius IV on customary papalist terms, Cusanus began to apply his newfound speculative notions of all theology as human conjecture mediated through the dialectic of *complicatio* ("enfolding") and *explicatio* ("unfolding"). His 1442 *Letter to Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo* first employed these metaphysical terms in ecclesiology, reflecting the late medieval search for the *vera ecclesia* within the church that would govern his later sermons and eventually his 1459 reform treatise, *Reformatio generalis*. Izbicki's argument takes Cusanus's ecclesiology at various points within his career as an evolving, contingent set of ideas rather than a pair of static, mutually exclusive poles. Like Izbicki, the Belgian-trained, Filipino medievalist Jovino de Guzman Miroy has also emphasized the development of Cusanus's ecclesiology after his conversion to the papacy.[31] Decrying any artificial contrast between medieval political thought and medieval philosophy, he highlights the philosophical character of *De concordantia catholica* as well as the political character of the 1439 *De docta ignorantia*. In so doing, he can argue that the decisive shift occurs not in the conversion to the papal minority at Basel, but in the application of his

[30] Thomas M. Izbicki, "The Church in the Light of Learned Ignorance," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 3 (1993): 186–214, and Thomas M. Izbicki, "The Church," in *Introducing Nicholas of Cusa*, 113–40.

[31] Jovino de Guzman Miroy, *Tracing Nicholas of Cusa's Early Development: The Relationship between "De Concordantia Catholica" and "De Docta Ignorantia"* (Louvain: Peeters, 2009). For a summary statement of his monograph, see Jovino de Guzman Miroy, "From Conciliar Unity to Mystical Union: The Relationship between Nicholas of Cusa's *Catholic Concordance* and *On Learned Ignorance*," in *The Church, the Councils, and Reform: The Legacy of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Gerald Christianson, Thomas M. Izbicki, and Christopher M. Bellitto (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 155–173.

metaphysics to his political thought, which leads him to ground church unity in mystical union with God rather than the conciliarist sources of Scripture, church fathers, or canon law.

Several issues are raised by these sundry investigations into Cusanus's later ecclesiology. First, if the later ecclesiology is judged by the earlier conciliar writings, then it will not be taken on its own terms as an expression of distinct ecclesiastical and historical circumstances. Second, the polarity between a strictly conciliar ecclesiology in the earlier Cusanus and a strictly papalist ecclesiology in the later Cusanus fails to account for the more subtle degrees of variation and development that might occur in the course of his thought. Third, an artificial distinction between Cusanus's ecclesiology and his speculative thought will obscure the overlap between the two and the influence each may have on the other. Any study of the later ecclesiology must account for these considerations. Finally, a central problem in the attempt to understand Cusanus's later ecclesiology has to do with a lack of sources. One reason for defaulting to *De concordantia catholica* as a normative expression of Cusanus's ecclesiology is the dearth of direct treatments of the topic the remainder of his career. Between the 1442 letter to Arévalo and the 1459 *Reformatio generalis*, there exist no treatises devoted to the church.[32] Any attempt to interpret his later ecclesiology must first find a locus for his later ecclesiological thought, and then address it on the basis of the corresponding historical context, intellectual development, and interpenetration of speculative ideas.

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[32] In the one work where Cusanus might have engaged it, the 1453 *De pace fidei*, he evades ecclesiology altogether. A plausible exception could be the 1450 *Contra Bohemos*, a series of letters composed during the ongoing contest over the 1433 *Compacta* reached at Basel. Cusanus in fact addresses church authority frequently with regard to papal and ecclesiastical authority over the administration of the Eucharist, but he more infers from his ecclesiology than he does address it directly. For an English translation, see Nicholas of Cusa, *Writings on Church and Reform*, ed. and trans. Thomas M. Izbicki (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 356–429. On the ecclesiological dimensions of *Contra Bohemos*, see Weier, "Christliche Existens und Kirchlichkeit," 264–78.

Reform in the Later Cusanus

A second interrelated object of this study is Cusanus's reform efforts, chiefly those of the Brixen episcopacy. Unlike his later ecclesiology, the later reforms have received substantial attention. The verdict accompanying that attention, however, has been near unequivocal debasement. In Karl Jaspers's comprehensive and otherwise generous account of his thought, he contrasts Cusanus as a philosopher with Cusanus as a reformer. The motivation for reform came not from "philosophical ideas" or Scripture, and thus not from an internal "change of heart" on the part of Cusanus.[33] As a result, there was a disconnect between his reforms and his thought:

> As a philosopher Cusanus was more understanding, more profound, and more communicative than he could ever be in his practical activities. In his best works he often moves us deeply by his magnificent open-mindedness and the vast range of his vision. The obtuseness of his political practice is something else again. Was he lacking in the honesty that is inseparable from the unremitting will to understand oneself? Was he incapable of seeing how incompatible his philosophy was with his ecclesiastical practice?[34]

Subsequent accounts of the cardinal bishop's later reform efforts have followed this trajectory. Pardon Tillinghast, in the first extensive treatment of the Brixen episcopacy in English, has argued that Cusanus's intellectual tendency "to work things out from first principles" resulted not in "coming to terms with the confusing forces of his own age, but returning rigidly to an early standard of simplicity and vigor, set forth line by line in a book of rules, and refusing to allow any mitigations." While his goal was internal transformation or "real reform," intransigence to his measures led the bishop to restrict his call for reform to "unconditional obedience."[35] Building on Jaspers in his study of the 1451–52 German legation, Donald Sullivan speaks of "the discrepancy between the impressive reform rationale Cusa subscribed to and the

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[33] Jaspers, *Great Philosophers*, 1:238.

[34] Jaspers, *Great Philosophers*, 1:242.

[35] Tillinghast, "Nicholas of Cusa vs. Sigmund," 377.

rather pedestrian character of the disciplinary decrees that most typify the legation" and goes on to claim that his reform efforts were too deeply bound up in "discipline, administration and condemnation" and so did not penetrate the spiritual root of problems—"it is the canon lawyer that it is too much evident in the decrees of 1451–52."[36] Francis Oakley summarized these accounts in his survey of the late medieval church, commenting on the "curious disjunctions between the spiritual vision of reform" in *De concordantia catholica* or *Reformatio generalis* and the "narrowly legalistic nature of so much of his practical reforming activities" that "render his reforming efforts as bishop of Brixen largely abortive."[37]

Such dour readings of reform in the later Cusanus no doubt have some truth to them, but a more nuanced picture emerges in specific studies. Scholarship on the reforms has concentrated on several distinct periods. One is the conciliar phase, most represented by the constitutional reform efforts of *De concordantia catholica* and its ancillary writings.[38] These discussions have focused on the relationship between his conciliar ecclesiology and his constitutional reforms, its place within late medieval reform, and the possible reasons for its abandonment.[39] In contrast to the earlier conciliar reforms, some scholars have attended to the 1459 reform treatise, *Reformatio generalis*. These studies have taken note of its place within late medieval curial reform efforts, the underlying concepts of reform present therein, its continuity with *De concordantia catholica*,

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[36] Sullivan, "Nicholas of Cusa as Reformer," 426.

[37] Francis Oakley, *The Western Church in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 241.

[38] Other writings from Cusanus's early conciliar period at Basel are included in Izbicki, *Writings on Church and Reform*, 2–161.

[39] For more notable examples, see Alberigo, *Chiesa Conciliare*, 293–354; James E. Biechler, "The Conciliar Constitution of the Church: Nicholas of Cusa's 'Catholic Concordance'," in *Open Catholicism: The Tradition at Its Best*, ed. David Efroymson and John Raines (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 87–110; Hendrix, "Nicholas of Cusa's Ecclesiology," 107–26; Hubert Jedin, *History of the Council of Trent*, 2 vols., trans. Ernest Graf (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1957), 1:20–22; Erich Meuthen, "Der Kanonist und die Kirchenreform," *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 24 (1998): 63–80; Watanabe, *The Political Ideas of Nicholas of Cusa*, 61–114; and Anton Weiler, "Nicholas of Cusa on the Reform of the Church," *Concilium* 77 (1962): 94–102.

and its relation to the later reforms of both sixteenth-century Protestants and Catholics.[40] While attention to the German legatine mission of 1451–52 has long captured the imagination of historians of the papacy, Donald Sullivan has devoted considerable attention to its vicissitudes, at times intensely critical of Cusanus and at times apologetic.[41] The legation provides an important prelude to the Brixen reforms, with respect to both the reforms attempted and the failures suffered, in particular the relation to the observant movement among the religious, the use of synodal legislation among the secular and diocesan clergy, and the regulation of late medieval popular piety.[42]

The primary source for discussion of Cusanus's reforms, however, remains the controversial Brixen episcopacy. Several reasons account for this. First, Cusanus appears anomalous in that he was a cardinal serving as a residential bishop, not in Italy, but in German lands. Second, his six-year residential episcopacy left a substantial paper trail of reform acts,

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[40] Gerald Christianson, "From Conciliar to Curial Reform in the Late Middle Ages," in *The Reformation as Christianization: Essays on Scott Hendrix's Christianization Thesis*, ed. Anna Marie Johnson and John A. Maxfield (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 33–48; Jürgen Dendorfer, "Die *Reformatio generalis* des Nikolaus von Kues zwischen den knoziliaren Traditionen zur Reform *in capite* und den Neuansätzen unter Papst Pius II (1458–64)," in *Renovatio et Unitas—Nikolaus von Kues als Reformer: Theorie und Praxis der Reformatio im 15.Jahrhundert*, ed. Thomas Frank and Norbert Winkler (Göttingen: Vandenhoek and Ruprecht Unipress, 2012), 137–56; Stephen Ehses, "Der Reformentwurf des Kardinals Nikolaus Cusanus," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 32 (1911): 274–97; Rudolf Haubst, "Der Reformentwurf Pius des Zweiten," *Römische Quartalschrift* 49 (1954): 188–242; Erwin Iserloh, "Reform der Kirche bei Nikolaus von Kues," *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 4 (1964): 54–73; Jedin, *History of the Council*, 1:120–24; Morimichi Watanabe, "Nicholas of Cusa and the Reform of the Roman Curia," in *Humanity and Divinity in Renaissance and Reformation: Essays in Honor of Charles Trinkaus*, ed. John W. O'Malley, Thomas M. Izbicki, and Gerald Christianson (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993), 185–203; and Morimichi Watanabe with Thomas M. Izbicki, "Nicholas of Cusa, *A General Reform of the Church*," in *Nicholas of Cusa on Christ and the Church*, 175–202.

[41] Sullivan, "Nicholas of Cusa as Reformer," 382–428, and Donald Sullivan, "Cusanus and Pastoral Renewal: The Reform of Popular Religion in the Germanies," in *Nicholas of Cusa on Christ and the Church*, 165–73, both of which draw on his dissertation, Donald Sullivan, "Nicholas of Cusa and Church Reform in the German Empire" (Ph.D. diss., University of Colorado, 1967). For earlier treatments, see Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*, 11 vols., ed. and trans. Frederick Ignatius Antrobus (London: J. Hodges, 1891), 2:104–137; J. Übinger, "Kardinallegat N. Cusanus in Deutschland, 1451–52," *Historisches Jahrbuch des Görresgesellschaft* 8 (1887): 629–65; and Vansteenberghe, *Cardinal Nicolas de Cues*, 87–139.

[42] For other treatments of these reforms, see Erich Meuthen, "Die deutsche Legationsreise des Nikolaus von Kues 1451/1452," in *Lebenslehren und Weltentwürfe im Übergang vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit*, ed. Hartmut Boockmann, Bernd Moeller, and Karl Stackmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoek and Ruprecht, 1989), 421–99, and Watanabe, *Concord and Reform*, 117–31.

from synodal statutes and monastic visitations to official legal or personal correspondence and sermons. Third, the tensions he encountered in Brixen embody many of the broader tensions that existed within the late medieval church, such as increasing territorialization and a corollary decrease in influence of the papacy on church and empire outside of Rome and the Papal States. Named bishop in 1450, he arrived in 1452 at the end of his legatine journey against much protest and only after extended diplomatic negations. He then served six uneven and progressively more troubled years in Brixen under three different popes. Two traditional lines of interpretation of Cusanus's episcopacy emerged in the mid-nineteenth century that reflected contrasting ecclesiopolitical commitments.[43] On the one hand, the Tyrolese Benedictine Albert Jäger's massive two-volume account of the period describes Cusanus's conflict with the Habsburg duke, Sigismund.[44] He established a tradition of Austrian nationalist scholarship that framed Cusanus not as a fellow German, but as a papal intruder from Rome impinging upon the religious sovereignty of the Tyrol.[45] On the other hand, Ludwig Pastor's romantically tinged history of the papacy presents the conflict in terms of the medieval contest for the *libertas ecclesiae* against secular rulers.[46] Others have followed him in treating Cusanus as a faithful prince-bishop of the medieval church who exercises his episcopal jurisdiction but encounters friction from religious

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[43] For the historiography of debates over Cusanus's Brixen tenure, see Pavlac, "Nicolaus Cusanus as Prince-Bishop of Brixen (1450–64): Historians and a Conflict of Church and State," *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques* 21 (1995): 131–54, and Watanabe, *Concord and Reform*, 149–52.

[44] Albert Jäger, *Der Streit des Cardinals Nikolaus von Cusa mit dem Herzoge Sigmund von Osterreich als Grafen von Tirol* (Innsbruck: Wagner'sche Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1861).

[45] The most notable examples are Anselm Sparber, *Die Brixner Fürstbischöfe im Mittelalter* (Bozen: Athesia, 1968), 139–59; Nikolaus Grass, "Cusanus als Rechtshistoriker, Quellenkritiker und Jurist: Skizzen und Fragmente," in *Cusanus Gedächtnisschrift*, ed. Nikolaus Grass (Innsbruck: Universitätsverlag Wagner, 1970), 101–210; and Wilhelm Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol: Das Wirken des Philosophen und Reformators als Fürstbischof von Brixen* (Bozen: Athesia, 2002).

[46] Pastor, *History of the Popes*, 3:178–87.

and political dissidents opposing rightly constituted ecclesiastical authority.[47] In both of these approaches, the accent falls on the broader ecclesiopolitical context and the late medieval question of ecclesiastical authority—relevant as they may be—and less so on the actual reforms of Cusanus in their specific ecclesiastical circumstances.

More recent literature, specifically produced by the Cusanus societies in Germany and the United States, has sought to nuance the picture through a more complete account of those ecclesiastical circumstances in Brixen. This scholarship has benefitted much from the collection and publication of Cusanus's official acts and personal correspondence in the *Acta Cusana*.[48] Two German scholars in particular, *Acta Cusana* editors Erich Meuthen and Herman Hallauer, have published their findings and placed an emphasis on the specific ecclesiastical contexts for the reforms Cusanus carried out in Brixen.[49] Across the Atlantic, Watanabe devoted the latter part of his career to the study of Cusanus's legal and political ideas in the service of reform as bishop of Brixen, as well as the opposition he received from other jurists and humanists within the region—often times old allies from the Council of Basel, as in the case of the notorious

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[47] Vansteenberghe, *Cardinal Nicolas de Cues*, 140–211; Bett, *Nicholas of Cusa*, 49–65; and Brian A Pavlac, "The Curse of Cusanus: Excommunication in Fifteenth Century Germany," in *Nicholas of Cusa and His Age: Intellect and Spirituality*, ed. Thomas M. Izbicki and Christopher Bellitto (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2002), 199–213.

[48] The *Acta Cusana* has now reached five volumes, Herman J. Hallauer and Erich Meuthen, ed., *Acta Cusana: Quellen zur Lebensgeschichte des Nikolaus von Kues*, 5 vols. (Hamburg: Meiner, 1976–2012). Prior to these volumes, many of the materials were found in Edmond Vansteenberghe, *Autour de la Docte ignorance: une controverse sur la théologie mystique au XV^e siècle* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1915); Josef Koch, ed., *Cusanus-Texte IV/1: Briefwechsel des Nikolaus von Cues, Erste Sammlung* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1944); Josef Koch, *Nikolaus von Cues and Seine Umwelt: Untersuchungen zu Cusanus-Texte IV/1: Briefe* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1948); Friedrich Hausmann, ed. *Cusanus-Texte IV/2: Briefwechsel des Nikolaus von Cues, Zweite Sammlung: Das Brixner Briefbuch des Kardinals Nikolaus von Kues* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1952); and Heinz Hürten, ed., *Cusanus-Texte V: Akten zur Reform des Bistums Brixen* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1960).

[49] For representative studies, see Hermann J. Hallauer, *Nikolaus von Kues, Bischof von Brixen (1450–1464): Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Bozen: Athesia, 2002); Hermann J. Hallauer, *Die Schlacht im Enneberg: Neue Quellen zur moralischen Wertung des Nikolaus von Kues* (Trier: Paulinus-Verlag, 1969); Erich Meuthen, "Neue Schlaglichter auf das Leben des Nikolaus von Kues," *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 4 (1964): 37–53, and Erich Meuthen, *Nicholas of Cusa*, 102–23.

Gregor Heimburg.[50] These interpretations, though at times elegiac, nonetheless have provided a distinctly ecclesiastical sketch of the Brixen episcopate as the crucible for Cusanus's later reforms rather than the larger theater of European politics.

This has in turn laid the groundwork for a more balanced treatment of the later reforms. Donald Sullivan, Walter Andreas Euler, Brian Pavlac, Thomas Izbicki, and Gerald Christianson have in various ways attempted to relate Cusanus's legatine and Brixen reforms with his Roman reforms, as well as his ongoing interest in mystical reform.[51] These studies all cast light on the relative continuity within Cusanus's concepts of reform, while calling attention to the need to look beyond official reform documentation or late medieval ecclesiopolitical struggles to the specific theological and mystical ideas undergirding his practice of reform and even the reform sermons delivered in the legation, in Brixen, and in Rome as sources for those ideas. One essay in particular by Klaus Reinhardt and Harold Schwaetzer has related the *vita activa* of reform with the *vita contemplativa* of mysticism, citing the influence of Pseudo-Dionysius as the link between the two and tracing that from *De concordantia* to *Reformatio generalis*, including the sermons.[52] This represents the sort of creative, interdisciplinary approach that might open new

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[50] See especially the chapters on monastic reform in Watanabe, *Concord and Reform*, 133–54 and 155–68.

[51] Sullivan, "Cusanus and Pastoral Renewal," 165–73; Walter Andreas Euler, *Cusanus und die Reform der Kirche heute* (Trier: Paulinus-Verlag, 1994); Walter Andreas Euler, "La réforme de l'Église chez Nicolas de Cues," in *La predication et l'Église chez Eckhardt et Nicolas de Cues*, ed. Marie-Anne Vannier (Paris: Les Éditions de Cerf, 2008), 227–42; Brian A. Pavlac, "Reform," in *Introducing Nicholas of Cusa*, 59–112; Thomas M. Izbicki, "*Christiformitas* in Nicholas of Cusa's Roman Sermons (1459)," *Asian Perspectives in the Arts and Humanities* 1 (2011): 1–16; Thomas M. Izbicki, "Cusanus Preaches Reform: The Visitation of St. Simeon, Trier, 1443, and the Legation Topos in His Sermons," in *Renovatio et Unitas*, 105–116; and Christianson, "From Conciliar to Curial Reform," 33–48.

[52] Klaus Reinhardt and Harold Schwaetzer, "Mystique et réforme de l'Église chez Nicolas de Cues," in *La predication et l'Église*, 255–76. For a parallel of this idea in Jean Gerson, see Steven Ozment, "The University and the Church: Patterns of Reform in Jean Gerson," *Medievalia et Humanistica* 1 (1970): 111–26.

vistas into understanding how a speculative thinker like Cusanus would have integrated his broader theological principles into his concepts and practice of reform.[53]

Scholarship on reform in the later Cusanus has skirted the normative character of the early Cusanus in a way ecclesiological studies have not. Yet there exist a number of weaknesses in the literature that merit redress. First, the notion of Cusanus as an authoritarian in his post-conciliar reforms must account for the specific historical and ecclesiastical circumstances requiring such authoritarian measures. Second, while attention to those exigencies is necessary, it must not occlude the broader concepts of reform that remain consistent or evolve naturally through his later reforming career. Third, any attempt to oppose Cusanus's theological or speculative ideas to his practical reform measures fails to take into consideration the possible use of those ideas in his articulation of reform and how they might in fact inform his practice. As with the later ecclesiology, the central question facing a study of Cusanus's later reform, however, remains that of sources. Whereas official reform documents may contain proposals for specific reforms, they do not always reflect the deeper assumptions supporting those reforms. What will be required is recourse to other materials relative to reform that might provide insight into the concepts undergirding his efforts and by extension either confirm, qualify, or augment the image of Cusanus as a monarchical papalist enforcing his reform measures on a hierocratic basis.

Ecclesiology, Reform, and the Brixen Sermons

One plausible, largely untapped source representative of both Cusanus's later ecclesiology and his later view of reform is the Brixen sermons. Scholarship on the sermons is an increasing but still nascent phenomenon. The four volumes (comprised of 22 fasciculi) of the sermons in the

[53] On this trend in recent Cusanus scholarship, see David Albertson, "Mystical Philosophy in the Fifteenth Century: New Directions in Research on Nicholas of Cusa," *Religion Compass* 4 (2010): 471–85.

Heidelberg critical edition only reached completion in 2005.[54] Prior to 1991, the Heidelberg *Opera Omnia* was restricted to 26 sermons preached through 1443. Two manuscript editions exist, one a two-codex version at the Vatican that Cusanus himself compiled during his time in Rome and a one-codex version at his hospice library in Bernkastel-Kues.[55] The sermons were composed by Cusanus or recorded by his secretary, Peter Erkelenz, then edited by Cusanus while in Rome, before sending a copy to Erkelenz. They were first published by the French humanist, Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, in his 1515 edition of Cusanus's works.[56] In conjunction with several early studies of the sermons, Josef Koch provided the first comprehensive dating and numbering in 1942.[57] It was not until 1970 that the existing editions were incorporated into the Heidelberg *Opera Omnia* and work began on the remainder under the auspices of the Institut für Cusanus-Forschung at the University of Trier and its directors, Rudolf Haubst and Klaus Reinhardt.[58] The 167 Brixen sermons—out of 293 total sermons—went to press between 1995 and 2005. Studies on the sermons themselves were infrequent prior to the critical edition, though they were explored substantially in broader volumes on Cusanus or Renaissance preaching by Haubst, James Biechler, and John O'Malley.[59] The team working on the critical edition, however, began

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[54] The critical edition of the sermons is found in volumes 16–19 of the *Opera Omnia*. The 167 Brixen-era sermons and the four Roman sermons are collected in volumes 18–19.

[55] Codex Cusanus 220 and codices Vaticani latini 1244 and 1245, respectively.

[56] Vansteenberghe, *Cardinal Nicolas de Cues*, 420.

[57] Josef Koch, *Cusanus-Texte I/7: Predigten* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1942). Other early texts and commentaries include Ernst Hoffman and Raymond Klibanksy, *Cusanus-Texte I/1: Predigten* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1929), Josef Koch, *Cusanus-Texte I/2–5: Predigten* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1936/37); and Josef Koch and Hans Teske, *Cusanus-Texte I/6: Predigten* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1938/39).

[58] Watanabe, *Companion*, 5. On the work of the Trier institute, see Marco Brösch and Walter Andreas Euler, *50 Jahre Cusanus-Gesellschaft und Institut für Cusanus-Forschung* (Trier: Paulinus-Verlag, 2011).

[59] Rudolf Haubst, *Das Bild des Einen und Dreieinen Gottes in der Welt nach Nikolaus von Kues* (Trier: Paulinus-Verlag, 1952); Rudolf Haubst, *Die Christologie des Nikolaus von Kues* (Freiburg: Herder, 1956); James E. Biechler, *The Religious Language of Nicholas of Cusa* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975); and John O'Malley, *Praise and Blame*, 94–101.

to publish its findings during the years of the editing work.[60] In the last decade, scores of articles on the sermons have emerged, though very few have directly addressed the topic of this study.[61]

The ecclesiology of the sermons has received several brief treatments. The first, published as a dissertation under Josef Koch in 1938 by Heinz Paetzoldt, was a short ultramontane interpretation of Cusanus's ecclesiology drawn from a body of only seventeen unedited sermons.[62] Heinz-Mohr incorporated the sermons into his treatment of Cusanus's ecclesiology, though with little attention to context or audience.[63] Biechler utilized a number of sermons in his study of *De pace fidei* and came to the conclusion that Cusanus was never able "to formulate an ecclesiology centered around an absolutist papacy" and so directed his attention away from it.[64] Recent studies have addressed various aspects of ecclesiology throughout the sermons on the basis of the critical edition, often contrasting the earlier sermons with the later and paralleling the development of ecclesiology in the sermons with that of his other writings.[65] More pertinent to this study is the work of Izbicki, who in several publications has stressed the importance of the sermons as the primary expressions of Cusanus's ecclesiology that thus fill the gap between the 1442 letter to Arévelo and the 1459 reform proposal. He argues for a "flattened" version of the

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[60] In addition to volumes 30 and 31 of the *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft*, published 2004 and 2005, there was volume 110 of the *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* published in 2001, and Klaus Reinhardt and Harold Schwaetzer, ed., *Nikolaus von Kues als Prediger* (Regensburg: Roderlag Verlag, 2004).

[61] For some general introductions to the Brixen sermons, see Walter Andreas Euler, "Die Predigten des Nikolaus von Kues," *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 110 (2001): 280–93; Walter Andreas Euler, "Proclamation of Christ in Selected Sermons from the Brixen Period," in *Nicholas of Cusa and His Age*, 89–104; Wilhelm Egger, "Die Kirche von Brixen zur Heiligen Schrift hinführen," *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 110 (2001): 294–307; Lawrence F. Hundersmarck, "Preaching," in *Introducing Nicholas of Cusa*, 232–69; and Heinrich Pauli, "Die geistige Welt der Brixener Predigten des Nikolaus von Kues," *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 22 (1995): 163–86.

[62] Herbert Paetzold, *Die Lehre des Nikolaus Cusanus von der Kirche auf Grund seiner Predigten* (Breslau: Klossok, 1938).

[63] Heinz-Mohr, *Unitas Christiana*, 105–112.

[64] Biechler, *Religious Language*, 169.

[65] Wendelin Noch, "Ekklesiologische Aspekte in den frühen Predigten des Nikolaus von Kues," in *Nikolaus von Kues als Prediger*, 29–44; Weier, "Der Glaube des Petrus," 267–79; and Thurner, "Das Kirchenbild," 137–165.

Dionysian hierarchies and an "ambivalent papalism" that subordinates the papacy to Peter himself and is primarily concerned with reform of the church through the Roman see.[66] These latter treatments suggest an ecclesiology neither static nor doctrinaire in the sermons, but rather fluid and malleable to the ecclesiastical context in which they are preached and to the speculative ideas he enunciates in parallel writings.

At this juncture, a logical question is whether the Brixen sermons are representative of Cusanus's ecclesiology. Medieval sermons themselves were not an occasion for the development of ecclesiological themes, but rather ecclesiological language in preaching was more often used to address the spiritual life of the hearers.[67] There are several reasons to allay concern. First, as Bond has shown in the context of Cusanus's early epistemological development, the sermons may be more reflective of this thought than other official or polemical works published at the same time.[68] Second, during the Brixen period, the normally prolific Cusanus ceased publication almost entirely. After drafting both *De pace fidei* and *De visione Dei* in 1453, Cusanus would write no extensive theological or philosophical work until 1458.[69] The sermons consequently provide the most logical source for Cusanus's ecclesiology during his residential episcopacy, indeed for his entire theological output between 1453 and 1458. Third, the preponderance of

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[66] Thomas M. Izbicki, "An Ambivalent Papalism: Peter in the Sermons of Nicholas of Cusa," in *Perspectives on Early Modern and Modern Intellectual History: Essays in Honor of Nancy S. Streuver*, ed. J. Marion and M.W. Schlitt (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2001), 49–65; and Izbicki, "Church," 126–33.

[67] For example, see Ruth Horie, *Perceptions of Ecclesia: Church and Soul in Medieval Dedication Sermons* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006). D'Avray mitigates this concern somewhat by maintaining that ecclesiology and piety are not mutually exclusive in the late Middle Ages, but the preaching of the papacy, for instance, reflects an increase in popular devotion to the papal office, D.L. d'Avray, "Papal Authority and Religious Sentiment in the Late Middle Ages," in *Church and Sovereignty, c. 590–1918: Essays in Honour of Michael Wilks*, ed. Diana Wood (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 393–408.

[68] Bond, "Historical Matrix," 161–63.

[69] During the first year of the Brixen episcopacy, he wrote three theological treatises (*De Pace Fidei*, *De Visione Dei*, *De Theologicis Complementis*), then in the next five years published only four additional treatises, three of which were mathematical (*De Mathematicis Complementis*, *De Caesarea Circuli Quadrata*, *De Mathematica Perfectione*) and one philosophical (*De Beryllo*), but none explicitly theological in nature.

sermons preached on Petrine festivals, church dedications, monastic and parochial church visitations, chapter visitations, and clerical synods, not to mention the myriad biblical texts addressing ecclesiological issues over the course of the liturgical cycle, provide ample material from which to compare his different treatments of the ecclesial images and determine which are more pertinent to and reflective of ecclesiological concerns.

The literature on reform in the sermons has also received additional stimulus from the publication of the critical edition. Previously, O'Malley's inclusion of Cusanus in his monograph on Renaissance preaching represented the only extensive effort, as he differentiates the concepts of reform in the Brixen and Roman sermons from those of humanist preachers in the papal chapel. O'Malley specifically highlights Cusanus's emphasis on obedience to prelates, conformity to one's estate, and the bishop or visitor as "legateships" based upon Christ himself.[70] In a later essay on pastoral reform in Cusanus, Sullivan softens this authoritarian picture by arguing that "inspirational preaching and catechetical instruction" were the primary means used by the cardinal legate to reform the laity.[71] More recent studies of the later sermons, especially at Brixen, have come to qualify the seemingly despotic demand for obedience by relating it to broader philosophical and theological concerns such as the tension between obedience and freedom or spiritual reform according to the image of Christ.[72] Others have suggested that

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[70] O'Malley, *Praise and Blame*, 98, 226.

[71] Sullivan, "Cusanus and Pastoral Renewal," 171.

[72] Walter Andreas Euler, "'Oboedire est vivere': Obedience and Freedom according to the Brixen Sermons of Nicholas of Cusa," in *Nicholas of Cusa on the Self and Self-Consciousness*, ed. Walter Andreas Euler, Ylva Gustafsson, and Iris Wikström (Abo: Abo Akademi University Press, 2010), 25–38; Euler, "La réforme de l'Église chez Nicolas de Cues," 227–42; Herold, "Doctrinae oboedientiae," 167–209; Izbicki, "Cusanus Preaches Reform," 105–116; Isabelle Mandrella, "Reformhandeln und spekulatives Denken bei Nicolaus Cusanus: Eine Verhältnisbestimmung," in *Renovatio et Unitas*, 37–52; and more broadly in her treatment of Cusanus's ethics as "practical philosophy," Isabella Mandrella, *Viva Imago: Die practische Philosophie des Nicolaus Cusanus* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2012).

Cusanus's understanding of hierarchy in the Brixen sermons offers a plausible bridge between his earlier papalist views and those undergirding the *Reformatio generalis*.[73]

The role of sermons as sources for Cusanus's concepts of reform requires less qualification than their role as sources for ecclesiology. The central question is not whether the sermons are substantial sources for his concepts of reform, but rather how to read them and relate them to his more explicit reform efforts. The predominant trend in the literature already cited on Cusanus's reforms is to focus on the reform acts, while rendering the sermons little more than corroborating evidence. In order to take the reform concepts in the sermons on their own terms, however, this study will follow the lines of reform idea methodology laid down by Gerhard Ladner and those associated with his approach.[74] Ladner's seminal study of reform ideas in the church's first millennium underscored the need to focus less on official acts of reform than on the terms used by the reformer and what they reflect about his notion of renewal in the church. While Ladner's studies seldom went further than the Gregorian reforms, others have extended his inquiries into the same late medieval reform context Cusanus occupied and dealt with ideas similar to his, including structural reform as a *reformatio in capite et membris*, observant reform of the religious, the relationship between mystical theology and the reform of the church, and the Dionysian hierarchies as ecclesiological mechanism for reform of the church.[75] This method

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[73] Christianson, "From Conciliar to Curial Reform," 46, and Izbicki, "Church," 126.

[74] Gerhart B. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959). See also Ladner, "Gregory the Great and Gregory VII: A Comparison of Their Concepts of Renewal," *Viator* 4 (1973): 1–27; Ladner, "Reformatio," in *Ecumenical Dialogue at Harvard*, ed. Samuel H. Miller and G. Ernest Wright (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1964), 172–90; and Ladner, "Two Gregorian Letters on the Sources and Nature of Gregory VII's Reform Ideology," *Studii Gregoriani* 5 (1956): 221–42.

[75] Relevant studies include Christopher M. Bellitto, *Nicholas de Clamanges: Spirituality, Person Reform, and Pastoral Renewal on the Eve of the Reformations* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001); Christopher M. Bellitto, *Renewing Christianity: A History of Church Reform from Day One to Vatican II* (New York: Paulist Press, 2001); Karl Augustin Frech, *Reform an Haupt und Gliedern: Untersuchen zur Entwicklung und Verwendung der Formulierung im Hoch- und Spätmittelalter* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1992); Johannes Helmrath, "Reform als Theme der Konzilien des Spätmittelalters," in *Christian Unity: The Council of Ferrara-Florence,*

offers two putative benefits for studying Cusanus's sermons. First, by highlighting certain lexical *topoi* or *loci*, it gives focus to a large body of sermons and enables these dominant motifs to be traced for both their quantitative and semantic shifts. Second, following Ladner's suggestion that ideas of personal reform were transferred to the institutional church by the Gregorian reforms, the study of reform ideas has emphasized the interrelatedness of ecclesiology and reform. Church reform assumes some notion of the goal toward which the church must be reformed, an ideal or image of what the church should look like.[76] This will prove indispensable in underscoring the fundamental ecclesiological character of Cusanus's reform ideas, as well as his emphasis on structural renewal in the church as a logical consequence of the spiritual renewal of its members.

This application of reform ideas in the sermons to the relationship of Cusanus's ecclesiology and reform brings to the fore two chief ideas that merit definition at the outset. The first is the mystical body, or *corpus mysticum*, as image of the church. *Corpus mysticum* was the predominant metaphor for the church throughout its first millennium, but medieval canonists, medieval corporation theories relating to universities or guilds, and the late medieval conciliar movement came to emphasize the mystical body's representative character for the entire church.[77] Cusanus availed himself of the image readily in his early conciliar treatise and related

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1438/39–1989, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1991), 75–152; Johannes Helmrath, "Theorie und Praxis der Kirchenreform in Spätmittelalter," *Rottenburger Jahrbuch für Kirchengeschichte* 11 (1992): 41–70; Louis B. Pascoe, *Church and Reform: Bishops, Theologians, and Canon Lawyers in the Thought of Pierre d'Ailly, 1351–1420* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2005); Pascoe, "Jean Gerson: The 'Ecclesia Primitiva' and Reform," *Traditio* 30 (1974): 379–409; and Pascoe, *Jean Gerson: Principles of Church Reform* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973); and Phillip H. Stump, *The Reforms of the Council of Constance (1414–1418)* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994). For a recent historiographical appraisal of Ladner and his influence, see the essays in Christopher M. Bellitto and David Zachariah Flanagin, ed. *Reassessing Reform: A Historical Investigation into Church Renewal* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2012).

[76] Frech, *Reform*, 16, and Pascoe, "Ecclesia Primitiva," 379.

[77] The most significant treatments of the mystical body metaphor in medieval ecclesiology and political thought are Black, *Council and Commune*, 138–145; Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957); Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages*, trans. Gemma Simmons with Richard Price (London: SCM Press, 2006); Cary J. Nederman, "Body Politics: The Diversification of Organic Metaphors in the Later Middle Ages,"

sermons, but seldom refers to it extensively until a period of intense usage between February and August 1456, treating it at length in eight of seventeen sermons.[78] The second idea is *christiformitas*, or likeness to Christ, as image for personal renewal.[79] This idea, another that Cusanus used in various writings throughout his career, increases in number exponentially throughout his later sermons beginning in late 1455. Furthermore, these two terms coalesce in the *Reformatio generalis*—as they had once earlier, interestingly enough, in *De concordantia catholica*—to provide a holistic picture of church reform as the restoration of health to a personified church through conformity to Christ, its head. Cusanus will increasingly ply these terms and their implicit relationship in his sermons at Brixen and later at Rome before bringing them together in his reform proposal.

The body of this study will devote itself to describing why and how he does so. Following the present introduction, the second chapter will present the historical context for the Brixen period by surveying the complex web of authorities in which the episcopate was enmeshed and

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Pensiero Politico Medievale 2 (2004): 59–87; Francis Oakley, "Natural Law, the *Corpus Mysticum*, and Consent," 786–810; Tilman Struve, *Die Entwicklung der Organologischen Staatsauffassung im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart: Hiersmann, 1978); and Tierney, *Foundations*, 106–141. Much stimulus for the identification of medieval corporation theories with medieval political thought and *mutatis mutandis* ecclesiology came from Otto von Gierke's massive four-volume study of German law, Otto von Gierke, *Das Deutsche Genossenschaftsrecht*, 4 vols. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgemeinschaft, 1954). Portions of that work are translated in Otto von Gierke. *Community in Historical Perspective*, ed. and trans. Antony Black (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), and Otto von Gierke, *Political Theories of the Middle Ages*, trans. F.W. Maitland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951).

[78] On the organic metaphor in Cusanus, see especially Nederman, "Body Politics," 78–81; Nederman, "Constititutionalism," 190–93; and more recently Marica Costiglio, "Organic Metaphors in 'De Concordantia Catholica' of Nicholas of Cusa," *Viator* 44 (2013), 311–22. For treatments of the mystical body in Cusanus's sermons, see Heinz-Mohr, *Unitas Christiana*, 14–20, and Thurner, "Das Kirchenbild," 137–165.

[79] Statistically, Schwaetzer notes 76 adjectival references to *christiformitas* in the sermons and another seven substantive, plus roughly 100 appearances of *conformitas* and *conformis* and 33 of the verbal *configurare*, Harold Schwaetzer, "La conformation au Christ d'après Nicolas de Cues," in *La predication et l'Église*, 121. For other studies of christiformitas in the sermons, see Albert Dahm, *Die Soteriologie des Nikolaus von Kues: Ihre Entwicklung von seinen frühen Predigten biz zum Jahr 1445* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1997), 186–92; Izbicki, "*Christiformitas*," 1–16; Clyde Lee Miller, "Form and Transformation: Christiformitas in Nicholas of Cusa," *Journal of Religion* (2010): 1–14; and Klaus Reinhardt, "Das Thema der Gottesburt und der Gotteskindschaft in den Predigten des Nikolaus von Kues," in *Nikolaus von Kues als Prediger*, 61–78.

how Cusanus's reforms—both explicitly using his episcopal jurisdiction and implicitly through the sermons preached at various pulpits—attempt to negotiate them. The third chapter offers a comprehensive overview of the two principal images for church and reform, *corpus mysticum* and *christiformitas*, in the context of ordinary and festive sermons preached to the Brixen cathedral constituents. This chapter will not only sketch these concepts as images for church reform, but also establish their fundamental relatedness and suggest a plausible reason for their increasing frequency in Cusanus's own revisitation of the Dionysian corpus. Chapters four and five then parallel one another by tracing the use of these concepts in his *ad status* reform sermons. The fourth chapter addresses his reform of the religious through extensive study of the monastic visitation sermons he preaches over the course of four years. The fifth chapter analyzes his synodal and chapter visitation sermons preached during the same timespan. Both the monastic and clerical reform sermons reflect a sharpening of his reform language in response to encroaching struggles within the diocese and his desire to find a different plane for reform beyond structural matters, one that would underscore the spiritual renewal of the individual and ultimately reform the church in aggregate. The sixth chapter will bring these lines of thought together in Rome as an epilogue to his church reform efforts. Through four sermons he delivered to the Roman basilica clergy and his 1459 reform proposal, Cusanus conceptualizes reform in the terms of *corpus mysticum* and *christiformitas* he had used throughout the Brixen episcopacy and presents it in a coherent vision for the salvific, hierarchical, even mystical renewal of the church, beginning with pope and curia.

Two caveats are in order before proceeding. First, this study concerns itself with Cusanus's preaching of reform, not with the sermons themselves. Consequently, it will give little attention

to matters of sermon structure or style unless pertinent to considerations of church and reform.[80] It will emphasize the theological content of those sermons rather than their reception or what they may in fact reflect about the audience or context.[81] Such concerns are not unimportant, and indeed may illuminate what this study finds to a greater degree, but they would also demand a broader scope than the current space allows. This leads to a second caveat: the present study is not an extended paean to Cusanus that merely seeks to exonerate him of charges of authoritarianism, but it does assume a certain congruence between his intellectual activity and his reform efforts that many critics have not. As capacious a thinker as Cusanus never failed to root his speculative writings in fundamental principles—*concordantia*, *docta ignorantia*, *coincidentia oppositorum*, *coniectura*, *Verbum*, *eikon*—so one would expect him to pursue that same sort of grounding in his reforms, indeed even more so in his reform sermons. The sermons, in contrast with many of the generally likeminded medieval revivalist, popular, or mendicant preachers, reflect his own idiosyncratic theology and should be read and interpreted in that light.[82] What

[80] To the degree that concerns of methodology in preaching are observed, they follow the lines laid down in L. J. Bataillon, "Approaches to the Study of Medieval Sermons," *Leeds Studies in English* 11 (1980): 19–35; Nicole Bériou, "Les sermons latins après 1200," in *The Sermon*, ed. Beverly Mayne Kienzle (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 363–447; D. L. d'Avray, "Method in the Study of Medieval Sermons," in *The Sermon*, 3–30; and John W. O'Malley, "Introduction: Medieval Preaching," in *De Ore Domini: Preacher and Word in the Middle Ages*, ed. Thomas L. Amos, Eugene A. Green, and Beverly Mayne Kienzle (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1989), 1–11.

[81] In this sense, it differs markedly from what might seem like a similar subject and treatment in D. Catherine Brown, *Pastor and Laity in the Theology of Jean Gerson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Brown uses Gerson's sermons to understand not only what the Parisian master thought about the laity, but also what the laity heard and believed about the topics he preached. Other recent examples of such an approach include Franco Mormando, *The Preacher's Demons: Bernardino of Siena and the Social Underworld of Early Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Cynthia L. Polecritti, *Preaching Peace in Renaissance Italy: Bernardino of Siena and His Audience* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000); and Augustine Thompson, *Revival Preachers and Politics in Thirteenth-Century Italy: The Great Devotion of 1233* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

[82] For studies reflective of sermons in these other genres, see D.L. d'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris before 1300* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); Kimberly A. Rivers, *Preaching the Memory of Virtue and Vice: Memory, Images, and Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010); H. Leith Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); and Larissa Taylor, *Soldiers of Christ: Preaching in Late Medieval and Reformation France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

follows will elucidate these ideas, while at the same time granting when and where Cusanus's ideals may have departed from his broader metaphysical principles or may have lost contact with the ecclesial reality in which he found himself.

CHAPTER TWO

CUSANUS IN CONTEXT: THE BRIXEN EPISCOPACY

Nicholas of Cusa inherited the Brixen diocese at a time of ecclesiastical and political transition. The papal monarchy predominant since the days of the eleventh-century Gregorian reforms, as well as the antecedent temporal claims of bishops as *Landesfürsten*, were waning.[1] The Avignon papacy (1305–77) and the Great Western Schism (1378–1415) led to the subsequent conciliar controversy waged at the councils of Constance (1414–18) and Basel (1430–49), and the conciliar impasse was only resolved by recourse to secular authority. The French and German churches gained increasing liberties in exchange for their support of the papacy at Basel, functionally reversing the aims of the Gregorian reforms.[2] Politically, the situation was no more settled. The fourteenth-century squabble of dynastic families over the imperial crown led to the Golden Bull of 1356 and a codified electorate that excluded Austria and Bavaria. Tensions between the Luxembourg, Habsburg, and Wittelsbach families continued well into the fifteenth century. The empire as a result would decrease in efficiency and

[1] On the earlier medieval developments, see I. S. Robinson, *The Papacy, 1073–1198: Continuity and Innovation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Gerd Tellenbach, *Church, State and Christian Society at the Time of the Investiture Controversy*, trans. Ralph F. Bennett (London: Basil Blackwell and Mott, 1959); Brian, Tierney, ed. *The Crisis of Church and State, 1050–1300* (Englewood Hills, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964); and Walter Ullmann, *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages: A Study in the Ideological Relation of Clerical to Lay Power* (London: Metheun, 1955).

[2] Antony Black, *Monarchy and Community*, 85–129; Oakley, *Western Church*, 23–80; and Stieber, *Pope Eugenius IV*, 276–347. See also Johannes Haller, *Papsttum und Kirchenreform: Vier Kapital zur Geschichte des Ausgehenden Mittelalters* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1903), which argues that the conciliar movement itself was the result of pressing territorialization.

influence.[3] This complex of factors led not to a vacuum of authority, but to an abundance of conflicting authorities, all with legitimate legal (civil or canonical) claims.[4] The expanding system of ecclesiastical jurisprudence with its reservations, prerogatives, and appeals, not to mention its ongoing claims to secular rule in the Papal States, had turned Rome into a bureaucracy akin to early modern nation-states.[5] Nor was secular authority monolithic in its own right. With the economic boom following the plague, rapid industrialization of commerce, and the dynastic quarrels, territorial dukes such as Sigismund of Habsburg and the local nobility were gaining more autonomy.[6] Bishops found themselves again caught in a contest between secular jurisdiction and ecclesiastical jurisdiction, only now with additional layers of complexity interwoven. They could be elected by cathedral canons, provided by the pope, or named by the emperor. They technically had episcopal jurisdiction over the secular clergy of the diocese, but exempt religious orders could claim independence from that jurisdiction, while many other orders defaulted to secular protection against the bishop's authority. As holders of secular land rights in many sees, the bishops were also forced to deal with economic and legal matters that found them in competition with territorial rulers or local nobility.

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[3] On these imperial developments, see Geoffrey Barraclough, *The Origins of Modern Germany*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1947), 282–367, and more recently Volker Press, "The Habsburg Lands: the Holy Roman Empire," in *Handbook of European History 1400–1600: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation*, 2 vols., ed. Thomas, Brady Jr., Heiko A. Oberman, and James D. Tracy (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 1:437–66.

[4] On the parallels between civil law and canon law at the time, see Constantin Fasolt, "Visions of Order in the Canonists and Civilians," in *Handbook of European History*, 2:31–59. This crisis of authority would outlast the fifteenth century and the medieval order, continuing into the sixteenth century and the settlement between the early modern monarchies. On this, see Theodore K. Rabb, *The Struggle for Stability in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

[5] For the secularization of Rome, in addition to the Oakley volume cited above, see Prodi, *Papal Prince*, 1–17. On the system of reservations, see Geoffrey Barraclough, *Papal Provisions: Aspects of Church History, Constitutional, Legal, and Administrative in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1935), and William Abel Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), 47–75.

[6] On these various dynamics, see Bernard Guenée, *States and Rulers in Later Medieval Europe*, trans. Juliet Vale (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1985), 1–22; Denys Hay, *Europe in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (New York: Holt, Reinhard, and Winston, 1966), 78–241, and Eugene F. Rice and Anthony Grafton, *The Foundations of Early Modern Europe, 1460–1559*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1994), 45–76.

These tensions would all come to bear on Cusanus and the Tyrolese lands that his episcopate covered. It should come as no surprise that interpretations of Cusanus's episcopacy have struggled to negotiate them. Interpreters have often framed him as a defender of papal sovereignty against secular intrusion or as a papal intruder on the religious sovereignty of the Tyrolese people.[7] His authoritarian bent in reform is then cast against the backdrop of a long-established conflict between ecclesiastical and temporal authorities. At times, it was. But Cusanus's Brixen tenure illustrates that there were more than two parties to the conflict. There was no single pope throughout Cusanus's episcopacy, but three different pontiffs, each with his own ecclesiopolitical commitments and pontifical goals. There was more than one secular authority, with the emperor, Frederick III, his cousin and rival, Duke Sigismund of the Tyrol, and the many local noble families (one could even add Cusanus as prince-bishop to the fray) all harboring competing interests. There was no single clergy, but a plurality of cathedral canons, monastic clergy, and cloistered religious. There was no single religious, but a variety of orders, some with papal exemptions and some that were subject to diocesan jurisdiction, some that were observant and some conventual, some Benedictine, Cistercian, or Augustinian. Cusanus himself operated in multiple spheres that often overlapped in unclearly defined ways. He was a cardinal of the Roman curia, a papal legate charged with reforming the church in Germany, a residential bishop in the diocese of Brixen, and a *Landesfürst* governing temporal affairs in his diocese. He had to balance the interests of Rome with those of secular rulers, the spiritual well-being of the Tyrolese people with temporal responsibilities to maintain the diocese's solvency, and the reform of the church with the long established religious and political customs in the region.

[7] See chapter one for bibliographical discussion.

This dizzying array of authorities and roles accounts for the bewilderment scholars often exhibit when explaining the mercurial ecclesiastical service of Cusanus at Brixen and the despotic, near draconian nature of his reforms. The Brixen diocese shared in common many religious practices that evoked concern from fifteenth-century ecclesiastics and reformers, and to which Cusanus would turn his attention upon arrival.[8] Those contested practices existed at all three levels of religious life—monastic, clerical, and lay. Many of the religious orders in his diocese were lax in the interpretation and observance of their monastic rules. Some houses had no rule at all—a condition prohibited since the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. Convents often did not practice enclosure (*clausura*), which entailed seclusion from commercial, sexual, and social interaction with the surrounding community. Both the regular clergy and secular clergy of the diocese often dismissed or marginalized their pastoral responsibilities, such as saying the mass, hearing confessions, and officiating the other rites of the church, or they performed them for remunerative gain. The laity, as elsewhere throughout late medieval Western Europe and most especially in German lands, developed numerous localized customs and rites that conflicted with ecclesiastical legislation or raised questions about their theological propriety. They took pilgrimage to unauthorized destinations, such as those with bleeding hosts or specious relics. They observed superstitious or secular festival days that recused them from vocational responsibilities and were often occasions for excessive drinking and public carousing rather than liturgical participation or public solemnity.

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[8] On the religious character of Germany in the fifteenth century, see Bernd Moeller, "Piety in Germany Around 1500," in *The Reformation in Medieval Perspective*, ed. Steven E. Ozment (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), 50–75. For general treatments of religious life and perceived abuses during this period, see John Bossy, *Christianity in the West, 1400–1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Natalie Zemon Davis, "From 'Popular Religion' to Religious Cultures," in *Reformation Europe: A Guide to Research*, ed. Steven Ozment (St. Louis: Center for Reformation Research, 1982), 321–41; E. Willliam Monter, *Ritual, Myth, and Magic in Early Modern Europe* (Athens, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1983); and R.W. Swanson, *Religion and Devotion in Europe, c. 1215–c.1515* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

As residential bishop, Cusanus committed himself to reforming what he perceived as abuses throughout the diocese and his efforts met with much resistance, to which he responded by employing whatever ecclesiopolotical resources he had at his disposal. His reliance upon such measures, however, can overshadow the pastoral dimension of his reform efforts. There is no doubt a strong authoritarian character to Cusanus's reforms, but it was complemented by his concern for the religious life of the people, clergy and laity alike. While this pastoral character itself comes through at times in his reform acts, it is all the more evident in his preaching. This chapter will lay the historical groundwork for the concepts of church and reform in Cusanus's sermons by seeking a balanced picture of his ecclesiastical context that underscores both the pragmatic need for authoritarian measures and the attention to pastoral care that complements those measures. First, it will survey the leading conflicts and antagonists Cusanus faced during his episcopacy and the manner in which they represent dilemmas common to church authority and reform in the fifteenth century. Second, it will survey the basic reform efforts introduced into this hostile context with an emphasis on both the authoritarian and pastoral dimensions of the reforms. Third, it will detail the characteristics, aims, and development of Cusanus's sermons as expressions of pastoral care and catechesis that complement his legislative acts and provide a window into his changing concepts of church and reform.[9]

Conflict and Authority in the Brixen Episcopacy

A series of representative conflicts during the Brixen years will serve to illustrate the overlapping spheres of authority that plagued Cusanus's episcopacy. The first beset him before

[9] The present chapter will not attempt a survey of the entire Brixen episcopacy, but rather a detailed analysis of several important conflicts that are representative of the ecclesiopolitical climate Cusanus faced, as well as the placement of the reforms and the sermons into this context. For surveys of the Brixen episcopacy, see Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*; Bett, *Nicholas of Cusa*, 49–65; Meuthen, *Nicholas of Cusa*, 102–23; Tillinghast, "Nicholas of Cusa vs. Sigmund," 57–79; and Vansteenberghe, *Cardinal Nicolas de Cues*, 140–211.

his arrival. Brixen itself was one of eight suffragan bishoprics to the archdiocese of Salzburg. Three of those, Brixen, Trent, and Chur, were under the auspices of Duke Sigismund, who had inherited the Tyrol from his father, Frederick IV, after a Habsburg quarrel in 1411.[10] Trent was essentially secularized and Chur was administered by the bishop of Constance, so it was only a matter of time for Brixen.[11] When Bishop Johan Röttel died in February 1450, it was assumed that Sigismund would have his choice of successor, but the Roman pontiff, Nicholas V, had other plans. The election of Röttel had been contested in 1446, so the pope sought to name the next bishop by reservation.[12] He had the perfect candidate in Cusanus. A cardinal since 1448, a willing defender of the papacy, an ambassador for Eugenius to Frederick III, a respected legal mind, a legate reformer to the Germanies, and a German himself, Cusanus could stint the encroachment of secular rule onto a diocese with many ecclesiastical, religious, and fiscal challenges. By the time Nicholas V made his decision public, however, the Brixen cathedral canons had already elected one of their own, Leonhard Wiesmayer. The election was held March 14, 1450, but on March 23, 1450, the pope named Cusanus bishop, claiming that the election of Wiesmayer was not canonical since it occurred in Sigismund's residence under the watchful eye of his garrison. Nicholas would publish a bull in October of that year defending his selection, to which the cathedral chapter responded with an appeal to a "better informed" pope or future council.

Several competing forces were at work in this conflict. First, the 1448 Concordat of Vienna, which effectively ended the conciliar controversy, affirmed decrees of councils at

[10] Watanabe, *Concord and Reform*, 144.

[11] Tillinghast, "Nicholas of Cusa vs. Sigmund," 379.

[12] Tillinghast, "Nicholas of Cusa vs. Sigmund," 372.

Constance and Basel stipulating the right of cathedral chapters to elect their own bishops.[13] The popes were simply to confirm them. Making matters worse, Cusanus was a signatory to the Concordat of Vienna yet now found himself named bishop against the very terms he helped to negotiate. Second, the Concordat of Vienna was affirmed by Frederick III, but only after Pope Eugenius IV had granted him the right to nominate six sees, including Brixen, in 1446. Nicholas V confirmed that right in 1447, a year before Vienna was signed, and no doubt proceeded with it in full view.[14] If the Brixen chapter had a right to contest the election, all the more did Frederick. The emperor was at odds with his cousin and rival in the Tyrol, so he allowed it to stand without a fight. Sigismund and the chapter appealed the decision of the pope on the basis of Vienna, while Nicholas would intone an "escape clause" given him to nullify the election and provide his own candidate if there were sufficient cause. The pope promised the chapter right to free election in the event of Cusanus's death without any papal interference. The situation was finally resolved when Cusanus himself persuaded Frederick to recognize his claim and only after a special commission of representatives from the diocese agreed upon a series of capitulations for the new bishop.[15] The first conflict of authority at Brixen reveals a complicated nexus of legal rights shared by numerous parties with competing interests and anticipates the problems of Cusanus's later episcopal efforts.

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[13] On the Concordat, see Stieber, *Pope Eugenius IV*, 304–22, and John B. Toews, "Pope Eugenius IV and the Concordat of Vienna (1448)—An Interpretation," *Church History* 34 (1965): 178–94.

[14] Tillinghast, "Nicholas of Cusa vs. Sigmund," 373.

[15] Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 90, and Tillinghast, "Nicholas of Cusa vs. Sigmund," 376. The commission was comprised of representatives from the archbishop of Salzburg, four Brixen canons, Wiesmayer, and two representatives of Sigismund. The stipulations entailed that all future disagreements would be mediated by the archbishop and his suffragans, Cusanus would maintain existing relations between duke and bishop and would protect towns and castles with men suitable to the duke, and a free election in the event of Cusanus's death would occur without right of papal intervention.

The second major imbroglio came only after an extended period of relative peace and stability following Cusanus's arrival, but it would remain an obstacle throughout his tenure. He entered the diocese in April 1452 after his extensive legatine journey and began preliminary visitation and inspection of diocesan books, clergy, and religious houses. One convent, the Benedictine nuns of Sonnenburg, immediately stood out for both its lax discipline and its involvement in a dispute over land rights at Enneberg, which the convent claimed to hold.[16] Cusanus attempted to resolve the latter by asking the convent's abbess, Verena von Stubben, to accept him as Enneberg's protector (*Vogt*), which she refused. The former, however, grew into the more pressing problem. The convent itself was comprised of daughters of the nobility and therefore immune to reform for political reasons. The result was a lack of internal discipline and commitment to monastic enclosure (*clausura*). During his return to Rome in May 1453, Cusanus reported on the status of the diocese as he found it and the progress of reform and in return received from Nicholas V a bull, *Inter cetera*, authorizing the reform of six problematic religious houses, including Sonnenburg. His initial efforts to visit Sonnenburg were rebuffed.[17] Cusanus would undertake the visitation himself in November 1453, enrolling as his collaborator Bernard von Waging, prior of the Benedictine house in Tegernsee.[18] The visit led Waging to suggest that no reform was possible apart from the replacement of Verena and the introduction of observant nuns from outside the convent. The sisters were recalcitrant and opposed the plan unless the

[16] The Sonnenburg affair takes up nearly half of the voluminous work by Jäger, *Der Streit*, 46–317. For more condensed treatments, see Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 164–216; Kolumban Sphar, "Nikolaus von Cues, das adelige Frauenstift Sonnenburg OSB und die mittelalterliche Nonnenklausur," in *Cusanus Gedächtnisschrift*, 307–26; and Vansteenberghe, *Cardinal Nicolas de Cues*, 145–52.

[17] One example occurred when Verena requested that the visitor commissioned with reforming the convent be George Riedt, abbot of the Cistercian house in Stams, only to have him decline the invitation. On this, see Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 155, and Watanabe, *Concord and Reform*, 147.

[18] On the first visitation, see Herman J. Hallauer, "Eine Visitation des Nikolaus von Kues im Benedictkinerinnenlokster Sonnenburg," *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 4 (1963): 104–125.

three visitors were from their own order, or unless the decision regarding their reform should come from the next provincial synod at Salzburg. Cusanus demanded their submission and the nuns appealed to the pope, but Nicholas V supported his bishop. Verena then brought Sigismund into the fray, appealing to him as protector, and he obliged. Eventually, a commission of Benedictine abbots met at Sonnenburg in February 1455 and found that the nuns were lax in their rule, did not pray the offices, left the convent to bathe and to attend weddings, and shared the proceeds of the *Stift* amongst themselves.[19] This would lead to Verena's excommunication in June 1455 and the interdict on Sonnenburg shortly thereafter.

The failed reform of Sonnenburg reflects another episode in the problematic proliferation of authorities at Brixen. The convent's appeal for help from Sigismund was in no way uncommon. Secular rulers since the earlier Middle Ages had taken it upon themselves to support monastic houses in their lands.[20] By the fifteenth century, the reform of those convents was often brought under their auspices, as well, for good and for ill.[21] Similar scenarios unfolded at two other Brixen houses. The Poor Clares of Brixen accepted reform after a heated contest with Cusanus when the solution prescribed for Sonnenburg (new abbess, new nuns from an observant convent) was put in place. Sigismund reacted strongly, evicting the sisters from their house.[22]

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[19] Bett, *Nicholas of Cusa*, 56.

[20] The traditional statement of this is Ulrich Stutz, "The Proprietary Church as an Element of Mediaeval German Ecclesiastical Law," in *Mediaeval Germany, 911–1250: Essays by German Historians*, trans. Geoffrey Barraclough (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1938), 35–70, but see now the more expansive treatment and qualification of Stutz's position in Susan Wood, *The Proprietary Church in the Medieval West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[21] For some, this meant supporting the reform of the religious by secular rulers, as in Manfred Schulze, *Fürsten und Reformation: Geistliche Reformpolitik weltlicher Fürsten vor der Reformation* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1991). At other times, it included the absorption of the houses and their assets into the expanding "state" of the early modern monarch. On this, see Dieter Stievermann, *Landesherrschaft und Klosterwesen im spätmittelalterlichen Württemberg* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1989), as well as his summary article on that position, Dieter Stievermann, "Klosterreform und Territorialstaat in Süddeutschland im 15. Jahrhundert," *Rottenburger Jahrbuch für Kirchengeschichte* 11 (1992): 149–160.

[22] Herman J. Hallauer, "Nikolaus von Kues und Das Brixener Klarissenkloster," *Mitteilungen und*

The Augustinian canons in Neustift feared the same result, so they rejected a planned visitation of their house, which resulted in the excommunication of their prior, Kasper von Aigner, in March 1456. A year later, they accepted visitation and reform under the auspices of an Augustinian visitor from Vienna.[23] The reform of Sonnenburg came much later and only when Sigismund gave up the nuns' defense after the so-called "Battle of Enneberg." In April 1458, Vererna sent her mercenaries to collect rent from the farmers of Enneberg, but the farmers took up arms in battle. They appealed to Cusanus's lieutenant for aid, whose forces finally drove the nuns from their house by force. After this, Sigismund relinquished support for Verena, leading to her final removal in April 1459, but only with the help of the bishop of Trent.[24]

A third in the series of conflicts was Cusanus's debate with the Brixen cathedral chapter over the appointment of his nephew, Simon von Wehlen, to a vacant prebend at the cathedral.[25] The benefice's previous holder happened to be Leonhard Wiesmayer, Cusanus's old nemesis from the contest over his election. The bishop of Chur died in 1453 and Wiesmayer was elected by the canons to replace him in March 1456. He left his prebend at Brixen and took the see while awaiting papal approval. The vacant benefice was granted to Wehlen, then a canon of the Brixen cathedral.[26] The new Spanish pope, Calixtus III, upon appeal from the bishop of Constance,

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Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft 6 (1967), 92.

[23] Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 101–04, and Herman J. Hallauer, "Nikolaus von Kues und das Chorherrenstift Neustift," in *Festschrift für Nikolaus Grass zum 60. Geburtstag dargebracht von Fachgenossen, Freunden und Schülern*, 2 vols., ed. Louis Carlen and Fritz Steinegger (Innsbruck: Wagner, 1974), 311–14.

[24] Meuthen, *Nicholas of Cusa*,122. On the battle at Enneberg, see Hallauer, *Die Schlacht im Enneberg*.

[25] For the narrative of this saga, see Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 223–37; Bett, *Nicholas of Cusa*, 60–61; Meuthen, *Nicholas of Cusa*, 108–10; Vansteenberghe, *Cardinal Nicolas de Cues*, 175–76; and Brian A Pavlac, "Curse of Cusanus," 206.

[26] There is question as to whether Cusanus convinced the cathedral chapter to elect Wehlen or Calixtus III gave him by provision. Bett, *Nicholas of Cusa*, 60, Tillinghast, "Nicholas of Cusa vs. Sigmund," 384, and Vansteenberghe, *Cardinal Nicolas de Cues*, 175 n.7, claim it was through papal provision, while Meuthen, *Nicolas of Cusa*, 108, by fiat of the chapter. Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 230, attributes it to Cusanus's desire alone, without reference to provision or election.

rejected Wiesmayer as bishop of Chur. He then gave it to one of his own officials, Antoine de Tosabetis, in May 1456. Wiesmayer had no benefice as a result and needed his prebend from Brixen back while he appealed to Rome. Cusanus gave the decision over to the Brixen chapter, but with a rather controversial proviso: if they did not confer it on Wehlen, they would be subject to excommunication. He conceded that Wehlen and Wiesmayer could split the proceeds until the situation at Chur was resolved, and also that Wiesmayer could retain the Brixen prebend if his appeal were rejected. Nonetheless, the chapter split into two factions, and four of the dissenting party who voted against Wehlen were excommunicated. The canons appealed the decision and the situation grew tense in Brixen, with the four excommunicated canons angrily reproaching Cusanus at the end of mass to lodge their written protest, nearly resulting in fisticuffs.

The situation was again muddled by a question of authority. The bishopric of Chur, though technically under the auspices of Duke Sigismund in the Tyrol, had been given for administration to the bishop of Constance by Eugenius IV.[27] Thus, the bishop of Constance contested Wiesmayer's election to the pope and in turn the appeal raised Calixtus's anger at Wiesmayer for taking charge of the see without proper confirmation. His response was to place someone else there, regardless the complications it might raise for Cusanus. It is important to underscore the significance of Calixtus's pontificate for the reform efforts in Brixen. His predecessor, the Italian Nicholas V, was a humanist, patron of the arts, and longtime friend of Cusanus, to whom the bishop dedicated numerous treatises.[28] The Spaniard Calixtus, on the other hand, had little interest in church reform.[29] His sole electoral capitulation was to organize a

[27] Watanabe, *Concord and Reform*, 136.

[28] On Nicholas V, see Morimichi Watanabe, *Companion*, 166–77, and specifically 170 for his relationship to Cusanus. More generally, see Pastor, *History of the Popes*, 2:3–26.

[29] On Calixtus III, see Pastor, *History of the Popes*, 2:317–43.

crusade against the Turks to retake Constantinople.[30] Consequently, he viewed the ongoing battles over reform in the Tyrol as distracting and he urged moderation from Cusanus. After Calixtus's April 1455 election, he would take sides against the bishop numerous times, including the appointment of Wehlen.[31] The prebend situation at Brixen eventually resolved itself due to Tosabetis's death. The pope conferred Chur on Wiesmayer in November 1456 and Wehlen received the benefice in Brixen.

A final contest of authority worth considering led to Cusanus's departure from Brixen: the Wilten affair that resulted in Sigismund being placed under interdict. Prior to the Wehlen debacle, Cusanus had reached friendly terms with Sigismund. They signed a treaty of friendship in March 1456, owing partly to the financial strength Cusanus had accrued for the diocese, which enabled him to lend money to his duke.[32] The situation quickly worsened over the next year, leading to an alleged attempt on Cusanus's life in July 1457. The bishop noticed a series of ominous signs—from armed guards to people following him to strange looks along the road from Brixen to the surprise of some that he was still alive—while visiting Innsbruck. He left hurriedly after staying at the abbey of the Wilten Premonstratensians near Innsbruck, certain that Sigismund had tried to kill him.[33] Fearing for his safety, Cusanus secluded himself in the Castle Andraz at Buchenstein for the remainder of his tenure in Brixen. He appealed for help to

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[30] J. Lulvès, "Päpstliche Wahlkapitulationen," *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 12 (1909), 216.

[31] Pavlac, "Curse of Cusanus," 209.

[32] Tillinghast, "Nicholas of Cusa vs. Sigmund," 384.

[33] There is much debate on whether Sigismund intended to kill Cusanus or merely wanted to frighten him, or if the event was little more than a product of Cusanus's own imagination. For a summary of these disputes, see Pavlac, "Nicolaus Cusanus as Prince-Bishop," 145–47.

Calixtus, who demanded Sigismund offer Cusanus a passage of safe conduct. When Sigismund did not comply, the pope imposed the interdict on him.[34]

Calixtus himself died in August 1458 and he was succeeded by a longtime acquaintance of Cusanus, the humanist and former conciliarist Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, who took the name Pius II.[35] It was Pius who brought him to Rome in November 1458, put him in charge of the temporal affairs of the Papal States, and named him legate of the city while the pope himself was in Mantua for a congress to raise support for a crusade. The debate over authority escalated again at the Congress of Mantua. Pius attempted to reconcile Sigismund and Cusanus by suspending the interdict against the duke and moderating the dispute. Anticipating Sigismund's recalcitrance, he issued the bull *Execrabilis* on January 18, 1460, which expressly prohibited appeals of papal decisions to future councils under the pain of excommunication. Against Pius's wishes, Cusanus would return to Brixen for a diocesan synod in Bruneck in 1460, which resulted in his imprisonment at the hands of the duke. Sigismund forced the bishop to sign over the diocese and all his temporal rights to it, thereby effectively ending his tenure in Brixen. The duke's actions led to another interdict pronounced in August 1460.[36] By this time, Sigismund had obtained the counsel of jurist Gregor Heimburg, a longtime antagonist of Cusanus and Pius from the Council of Basel and a noted critic of papal authority.[37] Sigismund and Heimburg responded to the interdict with a series of appeals to future councils or "better informed" popes the

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[34] Tillinghast, "Nicholas of Cusa vs. Sigmund," 387, and Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 363–66.

[35] Cusanus remained in his diocese during the conclave and so had no hand in the elevation of his longtime associate. On this, see R.J. Mitchell, *The Laurels and the Tiara: Pope Pius II, 1458–1464* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1963), 108.

[36] On the Bruneck siege and the ecclesiopolitical fallout, see Meuthen, *Nicholas of Cusa*, 112–15; Pavlac, "Curse of Cusanus," 210–11; and Tillinghast, "Nicholas of Cusa vs. Sigmund," 389.

[37] Watanabe, *Concord and Reform*, 283–99.

remainder of the year, until Pius intoned *Execrabilis* and excommunicated both in November 1460. Sigismund eventually recanted and was absolved, but Heimburg remained incorrigible.[38]

With this latest conflict, Cusanus's tenure as bishop of Brixen effectively came to a close. The period is rightly described by Meuthen as "tragic" because it failed to deliver the hope of reform Cusanus and Nicholas V had held out for his appointment. Much of the failure, however, owed not to the bishop's strict agenda or authoritarian bent, but rather to the abundance of mutually exclusive or overlapping authorities prevailing at the time. His primary obstacle was secular authority. Duke Sigismund took an active role in opposing the bishop, though often on unobjectionable grounds. It was not uncommon for a secular ruler to shield religious houses from reform, nor was it unprecedented for dukes of the Tyrol to overrule Brixen bishops.[39] While Sigismund might have been well within his rights to oppose Cusanus, his cousin Frederick III had every legal obligation to support the bishop. He had the right to oppose the Brixen chapter's selection of Wiesmayer in the first place or to intervene in the provision of Cusanus to assure his nomination went through uninhibited or to quash the contest by intoning his right to select the bishop of Brixen, but he chose to sidestep direct conflict. The situation was further complicated by Cusanus's role as *Landesfürst*, which forced him to pursue secular means to resolve diocesan disputes (such as the struggle between the Sonnenburg convent and the farmers of Enneberg), or

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[38] John A. F. Thompson, *Popes and Princes, 1417–1517: Politics and Polity in the Late Medieval Church* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1980), 17. The Brixen controversy was not the sole reason for *Execrabilis*, but there were other concerns, such as the expectation that a new crusade might eventuate in appeals to a council or the unwillingness of Diether of Mainz (who was also represented by Heimburg) to pay the pallium taxes upon election to his archbishopric. On Pius's account of the conflict with Sigismund, see *The Commentaries of Pius II*, 5 vols., trans. Florence A. Cragg (Northhampton, MA: Department of History of Smith College, 1937–57), 2:273–75, and 4:541.

[39] Tillinghast, "Nicholas of Cusa vs. Sigmund," 379. Three centuries of Brixen bishops had been vassals of Tyrolese dukes and Cusanus's own capitulations in accepting the see including his promise to retain the same relationship his predecessors had with Sigismund's predecessors.

to fortify diocesan finances through the acquisition of land or mining rights. The inevitable clash of roles was part and parcel of late medieval society.

The ecclesiastical realm was no panacea for the problem. The curious relationship of Cusanus to the three popes contemporaneous with his episcopacy reflects that. His good friend Nicholas V named him a cardinal, sent him on the legatine mission intended to spark reform in German lands, and fought the Brixen cathedral to ensure his candidate would take control of the increasingly secularized see. In the early years of his episcopate, Cusanus could count on Nicholas to support his reform efforts, whether by publishing a bull endorsing the reform of the religious or by rejecting appeals against the bishop's decisions. Calixtus III, however, had an entirely different agenda as Roman pontiff. He was primarily concerned with drumming up support for a crusade, which seemingly precluded support for Cusanus's reforms.[40] He took sides against the bishop on numerous occasions. The most telling was the case of George Riedt, whose excommunication Calixtus repealed by claiming that the Cistercian abbot was exempt from episcopal jurisdiction. In fact, Calixtus was correct, but openly opposing a requirement such as compulsory attendance at diocesan synods for all clergy, even exempt orders, is something Cusanus would not have expected from Nicholas V. When Pius II ascended to the pontificate, one of his electoral capitulations also included the organization of a crusade, and the other was the reform of the Roman curia, thereby splitting the difference between Calixtus and Nicholas. He called Cusanus to Rome to carry out the second while he pursued the first. His support for the embattled bishop of Brixen included opposition to Sigismund and Heimburg, such as his proscription of appeals to future councils. Each of the three popes gave Cusanus a different

[40] Pastor, *History of the* Popes, 2:344–87, and Tillinghast, "Nicholas of Cusa vs. Sigmund," 387.

degree of support in Brixen. There was no certainty, however, that at any point he would receive it or that it would matter in the Tyrol if he did.

Then there was the Brixen diocese itself, including the clergy and the religious. They too had to navigate the various levels of authority. The cathedral chapters invoked their traditional right to elect their own bishops and had legal corroboration of that right in the Concordat of Vienna. Many of the religious orders were indeed exempt from episcopal jurisdiction and could avail themselves of appeal to Rome. Other religious orders that were not exempt had long sought the patronage of secular rulers to protect them—and they were at risk of losing their houses if they did not. What becomes clear in surveying the conflicts of the Brixen years is that the categories of the Gregorian reforms often cited when dealing with Cusanus's episcopacy were no longer valid.[41] In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, cathedral chapters claimed the right to elect their own bishops over against secular rulers and received support to do so from popes; in fifteenth-century Brixen, they did so against the papacy and received support from a duke. Whereas the Gregorian reformers used their ecclesiastical jurisdiction to usurp temporal powers, now Cusanus was forced to use his secular responsibilities to facilitate his ecclesiastical goals. Even the confrontation of papacy with empire was reconfigured. During Cusanus's episcopacy, the emperor and pope were at peace, but both were at odds with the territorial ruler opposing the bishop. Given this superabundance of either mutually exclusive or indecipherably overlapping authorities, it stands to reason that Cusanus as bishop would act with force, seek reform by legislation, intone excommunication and interdict, and generally play the part of a medieval

[41] Pavlac, "Curse of Cusanus," 212; Tillinghast, "Nicholas of Cusa vs. Sigmund," 390; and Watanabe, *Concord and Reform*, 143. For a a concise treatment of the specific ecclesiopolitical debates during the course of the investiture controversy, see Uta-Renate Blumenthal, *The Investiture Controversy: Church and Monarchy from the Ninth to the Twelfth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 106–27 for the tensions between papacy and empire, and 135–74 for the outworking of that conflict ecclesiologically.

hierocrat. That was the political language of his day and, in order to accomplish the goals of reform he sought, it would require negotiating the existing ecclesiopolitical complexities.

Reforms of the Brixen Episcopacy

Given the nature of this context, the primary means Cusanus used to reform his diocese was episcopal authority.[42] Through synodal acts, published writ, and his own personal visitation, the bishop sought to reform the diocese in all three estates—religious, laity, and clergy. The religious were monks and nuns committed to a rule, ordinarily living in a cloistered community. The clergy were priests with liturgical and sacramental responsibilities, either regular clergy committed to a monastic rule (*regula*) or secular clergy, who were not. The laity comprised the remainder of the Christian populace.[43] Cusanus acted well within the authority of a fifteenth-century cardinal, legate, and residential bishop to regulate religious life in his diocese. At times, the result was reform by compulsion, leading to indifference or outright hostility. It is important, however, to balance the legislative side of the Brixen reforms with the pastoral care the bishop exhibited. Though they are not as dramatic as the more controversial reforms, there were many instances of pastoral sensitivity in preaching, catechesis, and church life throughout the Brixen tenure. Even the seemingly harshest of reforms had a larger goal for Cusanus, namely, the salvation of the faithful according to their estate.

The primary objective of his reform efforts was to improve the monastic orders in the diocese. This was little more than a continuation of his legation mission. In February 1451, at the

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[42] For a summary of the Brixen reforms, see Brian A. Pavlac, "Reform," in *Introducing Nicholas of Cusa*, 84–97. See also Hürten, *Akten zur Reform*, 42–68.

[43] On the threefold estates in the Middle Ages, see Pantin, *English Church*, 9–29, and Hay, *Europe*, 45–77. By the later Middle Ages, the changing social landscape made descriptions of the late medieval estates very fluid. See Giles Constable, *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 249–360.

provincial synod in Salzburg, Cusanus published a reform decree (*Quoniam dignum*) that included extensive regulations for the religious. Two in particular were the strict enclosure of all nuns and the reform of all the religious orders within a year.[44] Since Brixen was a suffragan see of the Salzburg archdiocese, the decree was also binding for the bishop's new diocese. Upon arrival in Brixen in April 1453, he posted the 1451 Salzburg decree on the cathedral doors. By that time, the year in which the religious houses had to comply with Salzburg had passed. In order to assess their compliance, he undertook initial visitations from April to June 1452, then iteratively over the next year. It was only in Rome the following May that Cusanus reported on the early returns in Brixen and received from Pope Nicholas V's hand the bull *Inter cetera*, granting Cusanus specific papal authority to reform six religious houses in his diocese: the Benedictine convent at Sonnenburg, the Poor Clares of Brixen, the Cistercians of Stams, the Augustinian canons at Neustift, and the Benedictines at St. Georgenberg. After his return from Rome, he devoted the majority of his attention over the next two years to those houses.

The reform of the religious in Brixen has come to symbolize Cusanus's approach to reform in general and to monastic orders in particular. As he had throughout the German legation, he used the papal bull as impetus to enforce the observance of the rule at the respective houses. His method was to visit a house or arrange a visit by a neighboring observant congregation, with the expectation that the house would comply with the reform. The congregations were at times reticent, however, to accept visitation or to participate in the visitation of another because it would implicitly obligate them to reform. As noted above, Sonnenberg continually resisted reform by appealing to Sigismund as protector and success only came when Sigismund gave way. The Poor Clares of Brixen were resistant because they were shielded by the local nobility,

[44] The points of the decree are found in Koch, *Nikolaus von Cues und Seine Umwelt*, 112.

chiefly the prominent family of Oswald von Wolkenstein, whose daughter Maria was abbess. The solution Cusanus was unable to accomplish with Sonnenberg eventually worked for the Clares. He removed the lax Maria as abbess, replacing her with an observant nun and bringing in observant sisters from another Franciscan convent.[45] He had no success reforming the St. Georgenberg Benedictines in his one visit since they were protected by Sigismund.[46] Neustift, though its reform was not complete when Cusanus first surveyed it, proved a usefully ally in the bishop's reform efforts elsewhere. But the prior, Kasper von Aigner, balked at a planned visitation in spring 1456 because he feared recrimination from Sigismund, and as a result he was excommunicated. A year later, however, the Neustift canons reformed under the auspices of St. Dorothy of Vienna. Of the houses named in *Inter cetera*, the Cistercians at Stams needed the least reform, but their unwillingness to assist with the reform efforts elsewhere (such as Sonnenburg) and the increasing intransigence of their abbot, George Riedt, put them at odds with Cusanus and led to Riedt's brief excommunication.[47] These instances conform to the traditional picture of a Cusanus who sought to bring about observance amongst the religious through legislation and, failing that, excommunication for individuals or interdict for their communities.

While this strict approach to monastic reform in his diocese has received the most attention and criticism, there was alongside it an overlooked pastoral component. His emphasis on observance itself drew much from the observant movement spreading through the Western church at the time. Cusanus was not a monk himself, but he shared many sympathies with the religious. He carried on extensive dialogue with a number of monasteries about the nature of mystical theology, dedicating his 1453 treatise on mystical theology, *De visione Dei*, to the

[45] Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 120–24, and Hallauer, "Brixener Klarissenkloster," 75–123.

[46] Pavlac, "Reform," 88.

[47] Pavlac, "Curse of Cusanus," 209.

Benedictines at Tegernsee.[48] He even expressed his desire to retire and join the brothers at Tegernsee in study and devotion.[49] It was in this correspondence with Tegernsee that he expressed his view of monastic reform as a *perfectam observanciam et reformacionem*—not out of subservience to ecclesiastical authorities, but because it accorded with his understanding of the religious life as a *vita contemplativa* oriented to the salvation of the souls under its canonical rule.[50] He saw firsthand during the legation the vitality of reformed congregations and used them as models for reform. In addition to Tegernsee, he had come into contact with the Benedictines at Melk and the Augustinians at Windesheim.[51] His primary reform strategy was to connect unreformed houses with observant congregations. He gave care of the Poor Clares in Brixen to the Nuremberg and Strasbourg Franciscans, and the Premonstratensians at Wilten to the Magdeburg house. He also delegated the visitation of Wilten to the abbot of Stams and prior of Neustift, and the visitation of Gries to the deacon of Neustift.[52] His concern for the welfare of the religious extended beyond their spiritual needs. In 1456, at the height of the controversies in Brixen, he established a hospice in his hometown of Bernkastel-Kues, in part as a residence for ill or dying religious. Patients in the hospital were to live according to the canons of the reformed

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[48] For the conversations with Tegernsee on this matter, see Margot Schmidt, "Nikolaus von Kues im Gespräch mit den Tegernseer Mönchen über Wesen und Sinn der Mystik," *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 18 (1989): 25–49. A translation of *De visione Dei* with overview of the debate is found in Jasper Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa's Dialectical Mysticism: Text, Translation, and Interpretive Study of De Visione Dei* (Minneapolis: Arthur J. Banning Press, 1985).

[49] Vansteenberghe, *Autour*, 122. Writing to Tegernsee abbot Kaspar von Aindorffer in a letter dated February 12, 1454: "Retrahor tamen plurimum ab hiis altissimis per huius mundi occupaciones; propterea fratribus dixi michi cellam pararie. Utinum concederetur michi sacro ocio frui inter fratres, qui vacant et vident quoniam suavis est dominus."

[50] Vansteenberghe, *Autour*, 152. The Tergernsee prior and eventual visitor of Sonnenburg, Bernard von Waging, calling to mind Cusanus's own words in a letter from September 1454: "Sepius verbum Rev patris...animo occurit, quo dixit se scilicet velle libenter habere in sue diocesis monasteriis perfectam observanciam et reformacionem."

[51] Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 92–99, and Sullivan, "Nicholas of Cusa as Reformer," 411.

[52] For a summary of these, see Hermann J. Hallauer, "Nikolaus von Kues als Bischof und Landesfürst," *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 21 (1994), 282.

Augustinian Windesheim congregation.[53] Though Cusanus intoned papal authority and his own episcopal jurisdiction to enforce observant reform on the religious houses within his diocese, those efforts were complemented by a fraternity he had with reformed congregations and with their common commitment to the realization of the *vita contemplativa.*

A second sphere of reform activity in Brixen dealt with the clergy. By the later Middle Ages, the clergy were essentially divided into two categories: the regular clergy and the secular clergy. Not all the religious were clergy, such as nuns or hermits, and not all clergy were religious, such as secular priests, but all regular and secular clergy had eucharistic and liturgical responsibilities, either in a parish or in a monastery.[54] Cusanus availed himself of an ancient instrument for the reform of the clergy—the diocesan synod. Prior to his arrival, Brixen had convened only three diocesan synods in the first half of the fifteenth century.[55] Over the course of his tenure, however, he convened four of them. The first one, in 1453, stipulated the annual convocation of diocesan synods.[56] The bishop largely accomplished his plan, holding subsequent synods in 1454 (of which there are no extant records other than his synodal homily), 1455, and 1457. At the last of the synods, he made attendance mandatory for all regular and secular clergy under threat of excommunication. In addition to diocesan synods, Cusanus also undertook or authorized visitations of the secular clergy. He visited the Brixen cathedral chapter in Lent 1454,

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[53] Morimichi Watanabe, "St. Nicholas Hospital at Kues as a Spiritual Legacy of Nicholas of Cusa," in *Nicholas of Cusa and His Age*, 217–36.

[54] On the late medieval clergy, see Pantin, *English Church*, 9–29, and Hay, *Europe*, 45–60. For a more recent monograph that qualifies this picture somewhat, see Kirsi Salonen and Jussi Hanska, *Entering a Clerical Career at the Roman Curia, 1458–1471* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 1–18.

[55] Hürten, *Akten zur Reform*, 43. The Council of Constance had established obligatory episcopal conferences, but after the Salzburg provincial synod in 1418 proclaiming the Constance decree, the Brixen clergy only met again in 1419, 1438, and 1449, Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 237.

[56] The extant records of the 1453, 1455, and 1457 synods are recently republished with German translation in Wilhelm Baum and Raimond Senoner, ed., *Nikolaus von Kues: Briefe und Dokumente zum Brixner Streit: Bd. 2, Nikolaus von Kues als Zeelsorger, Briefe, Denkschriften (1453–1458)* (Klagenfurt: Verlag Kitab, 2000), 14–76.

in preparation for which he composed a visitation order concerning a variety of matters, from liturgical guidelines and clergy conduct to administration of cathedral affairs.[57] He drafted another extensive visitation order for parochial churches in the diocese a year later (ostensibly based on a 1408 order by Jean Gerson) and submitted it to the 1455 synod.[58]

As with monastic reform, Cusanus used clerical synods and visitations as opportunities to regulate the clergy of his diocese through legislation. He addressed several general areas in his statutes and visitation orders. The first dealt with clerical oversight, including the annual convocation of diocesan synods and their compulsory nature. He also divided the diocese into three chapters for additional annual meetings. Cusanus first suggested this in the 1453 synod, but finally brought it to pass at the 1457 synod. He established chapters at Brixen, Innichen, and Wilten that would meet at appointed times between diocesan synods, and then report to the next synod.[59] The synodal legislation and visitation orders also addressed general concerns of clergy conduct. The 1451 decree at Salzburg had prohibited concubinage, so the first diocesan synod renewed that provision and gave clergy a month to comply or risk loss of benefices and expulsion from the diocese.[60] Similar issues such as frivolity during Lent, card playing, and clerical dress and grooming were also addressed, the latter reflecting a concern of his that would be raised again during his 1459 Roman reforms.[61] Another area dealt with catechetical, liturgical,

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[57] Baum and Senoner, *Nikolaus von Kues als Zeelsorger*, 88–106.

[58] Baum and Senoner, *Nikolaus von Kues als Zeelsorger*, 116–38. Gerson's "de visitation praelatorum" for the provincial council of Reims in April 1408 was the basis for 37 of Cusanus's 98 visitation questions, Hürten, *Akten zur Reform*, 51.

[59] Vansteenberghe, *Cardinal Nicolas de Cues*, 143. Cf. Hürten, *Akten zur Reform*, 63, and Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 52.

[60] Bett, *Nicholas of Cusa*, 50.

[61] On clerical dress in Cusanus, see Thomas M. Izbicki, "Forbidden Colors in the Regulation of Clerical Dress from the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) to the Time of Nicholas of Cusa (d. 1464)," in *Medieval Clothing and Textiles I*, ed. Robin Netherton and Gale R. Owen-Crocker (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2005), 105–14.

and sacramental reform. At the 1453 synod, he exhorted the clergy to instruct the faithful in the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments, as he had earlier in the legation when he instituted a "wall catechism" at Hildesheim.[62] The 1455 synod sought to approve a new missal and a reformed liturgical calendar in order to assure their orthodoxy; the 1457 synod required their purchase and use at the risk, once again, of excommunication.[63] Cusanus's proactive reform of the clergy in his synodal statutes and chapter visitations reflects a strict legislation of reform and willingness to enforce it through punitive means.

Like his monastic reform, however, there was another component of the clerical reform efforts that concerned itself with pastoral care and the role the clergy played in the salvation of the faithful. He expressed this in the statutes of the 1453 synod, claiming that the matters addressed required obedience because they "concerned the salvation of souls."[64] He emphasized through synodal act and visitation regulations the responsibility of the clergy in pastoral care for the laity. He required proper celebration of the mass, including attention to rubrics, care for paraments, and less ostentatious sacramental veneration, because of the central role he accorded the Eucharist in salvation.[65] He told the clergy to urge the faithful to attend mass more frequently and prohibited the sale of goods during mass to encourage fewer distractions.[66] In restricting pilgrimages to certain less specious destinations, he required that the laity first seek approval of the proposed site for their journey before embarking.[67] As a result of the 1453 synod, he also

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[62] Sullivan, "Nicholas of Cusa as Reformer," 407. The wall catechism also followed Gerson.

[63] Vansteenberghe, *Cardinal Nicolas de Cues*, 142–43.

[64] Cited in Hürten, *Akten zur Reform*, 54: "quod sint obedientes in his, que concernunt animarum salutem."

[65] On liturgical reforms at Brixen, see Josef A. Jüngmann, "Nicolaus Cusanus als Reformator des Gottesdienstes," in *Cusanus Gedächtnisschrift*, 23–31.

[66] Bett, *Nicholas of Cusa*, 50.

[67] Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 242.

drafted a marriage rite that sought greater participation by the clergy than the more customary blessing prominent in Brixen at the time.[68] Above all, his emphasis on catechesis by the clergy underscores the significance he placed on the didactic role of the priesthood, which comes to expression in his own sermons. Cusanus's sermons set an example for such catechesis, not only before the laity at Brixen, but throughout the diocese at parochial churches, monastic visitations, and even those he delivered at each of the diocesan synods. The legislative dimension of clerical reform had its pastoral complement in the instrumental role the clergy played sacramentally, liturgically, and catechetically for the laity.

The final sphere of Cusanus's reform activity at Brixen that merits consideration was his attention to the laity and to popular devotion.[69] Many of the same synodal statutes Cusanus used for the reform of the clergy applied to the laity as well. During the German legation he had encountered numerous excesses in devotional practice. Among the more prominent was the display of miraculous bleeding hosts that served as destination sites for pilgrimages and sources of revenue for the region.[70] Wilsnack had the most famous of bleeding hosts and, though he did not visit it, he denounced the practice through a decree at the 1451 synod of its archdiocese in Magdeburg.[71] One of the monasteries stipulated in the 1453 *Inter cetera*, the Benedictine house at St. Georgenberg, had a bleeding host, giving Duke Sigismund good reason to protect the

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[68] Hürten, *Akten zur Reform des Bistums Brixen*, 44, and Pavlac, "Reform," 91.

[69] A fourth sphere that could be added was his concern for the reform of diocesan finances and temporal affairs, but these were less directly related to pastoral care and not as pertinent to the current study. On this matter, see Hallauer, "Nikolaus von Kues als Bischof und Landesfürst," 275–313.

[70] On the bleeding hosts, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007). For Cusanus and the bleeding hosts, see Watanabe, "Nicolaus Cusanus and the Veneration of the Bleeding Hosts at Wilsnack," 210–23.

[71] Sullivan, "Nicholas of Cusa as Reformer," 403.

monastery from reform because of the proceeds it brought to the Tyrol.[72] At the 1453 synod, Cusanus limited pilgrimage sites to Brixen, Rome, St. James of Compastella, and others of ancient provenance, thereby excluding St. Georgenberg and its bleeding host.[73] There was also the matter of witchcraft. Cusanus examined two women suspected of witchcraft, only to exonerate them of charges by claiming that they were not witches, but delirious and in need of instruction.[74] Other controversial reforms dealt with the increasing number of festival days of the later Middle Ages. His 1455 reform of the calendar eliminated festivals of superstitious origin, such as the Octave of Epiphany, St. Valentine's, and other offices that were believed to stave off storms, epilepsy, or livestock illness.[75] His calendar also categorized festival days into four classes and reduced the number of days that would preclude work.[76] Some reforms were of a strictly disciplinary nature and these often provoked the most resistance. The 1453 synod dictated strict dietary regulations during Lent, including the prohibition of dairy products such as milk, butter, or eggs. This became a source of immediate contention since it was common fare for the rural population.[77] On Pentecost Sunday 1455, he prohibited dancing and carrying weapons during the popular annual Brixen church dedication festival, threatening to exclude offenders from the Eucharist or from burial in the church cemetery. This caused particular

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[72] Pavlac, "Reform," 88.

[73] Bett, *Nicholas of Cusa*, 51, and Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 242. He also excluded Wilten, which no doubt was part of the increasing tensions between the Cistercian house there and Cusanus.

[74] He addresses this in "Haec omnia dabo tibi," *Sermo* 271 (*h* XIX: 492–99). The seminal treatments of medieval witchcraft and magic remain Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972), 227–64 for the time period pertinent to Cusanus; Richard Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials: Their Foundations in Popular and Learned Culture, 1300–1500* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976); and Edward Peters, *The Magician, the Witch, and the Law* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978).

[75] Bett, *Nicholas of Cusa*, 52.

[76] Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 242.

[77] Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 242.

consternation on the part of the Gufidaun nobility, who were charged with overseeing the festival and were thereafter at odds with Cusanus.[78]

It is worth remembering again that while these reforms were enforced on the Tyrolese people against their wishes at times and did offend many, for Cusanus there was a larger pastoral goal driving them. Miraculous hosts had proliferated throughout the church and even received approval from Nicholas V, but Cusanus opposed them on the grounds that they distracted attention from the Christ on the altar in the sacrament.[79] Since his days at Basel, he had sought the reform of the calendar, and now he extended that interest to address popular devotion.[80] His prohibitions on festival days followed those of respected reformers such as Pierre d'Ailly, Nicholas de Clamanges, and Jean Gerson, and through such measures he sought to restore sanctity and piety to such occasions.[81] Nevertheless, the legislation of reform throughout the Brixen period reveals a Cusanus availing himself of the episcopal powers designated to him, even when that came at the cost of opposing popular custom or threatening excommunication and interdict. At the same time, pastoral concerns pervade his episcopacy and augment the standard picture of him as an autocrat or despot. Monastic, clerical, and devotional reform efforts were the logical corollary of his belief in the teleological ordering of the church toward salvation and in the liturgical, sacramental character of that church as the means for mediating salvation to the faithful.

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[78] Tillinghast, "Nicholas of Cusa vs. Sigmund," 385.

[79] Sullivan, "Nicholas of Cusa as Reformer," 404.

[80] Bett, *Nicholas of Cusa*, 24–26.

[81] Pavlac, "Reform," 92, and Sullivan, "Nicholas of Cusa as Reformer," 165. Cusanus deals with this at length in a sermon to the parochial church in Brixen, "Respice de caelo et vide et visita vineam istam," *Sermo* 196.15 (*fi* XVIII: 417).

Sermons of the Brixen Episcopacy

The balance of authoritarian dictate and pastoral care tilts toward the latter throughout the Brixen sermons. In this sense, they became the practical extensions of his legatine mission. Preaching in Cusanus's earlier career was infrequent, though the sermons themselves were copious in length and annotation. As a dean of St. Florin in Koblenz during the Basel years, then later in diplomatic service of Eugenius IV, he only had opportunity to preach 75 sermons in the span of roughly twenty years, and those mostly on feast days. Some were more strictly concerned with reform, but most were capacious theological treatments of the theme for the day. The legatine journey, on the other hand, brought him more frequent preaching responsibilities. He delivered 46 sermons during the fifteen-month legation. Due to the busy schedule of travel and visitation, he was unable to devote the sort of time to sermon composition he had earlier in his career, so the legatine sermons were considerably shorter and less annotated. On the other hand, they were more direct and applicable to reform. Sullivan argues that in fact the sermons were the primary means for his reform of the laity.[82] Furthermore, this fits within the larger goal of the legation as a spiritual renewal of the laity through preaching and catechesis.[83]

The Brixen sermons would retain this emphasis on reform through preaching, only expanding in both length and scope. The earliest recorded sermons Cusanus delivers in his episcopate do not differ markedly from the legation sermons. They are short, direct, and ordinarily pertinent to reform. They are also sparse. He recorded only four sermons his first year

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[82] Sullivan, "Cusanus and Pastoral Renewal," 168.

[83] "Cusanus's reform strategy clearly emerges from his legation activities: to edify the people and regulate the main forms of church liturgy and popular religious practice according to the fixed usages of canon law and of church synods, as well as the rigorous ascetic principles of the *devotio moderna* movement so important to Cusanus's own spiritual formation. Finally, all such measures served for him a single overarching purpose, the restoration of the pristine innocence of the *forma Christi* assumed at baptism by each Christian, but subsequently lost. Cusanus remained firmly rooted in the conservative hierarchical tradition of medieval religious renewal," Sullivan, "Cusanus and Pastoral Renewal," 172.

due to travels abroad and visitation near, and then only another sixteen sermons the remainder of 1453 after his return from Rome.[84] In 1454, however, Cusanus begins a period of regular preaching that becomes a continuous means of reform. The shorter, practical homilies at visitation or festival during the legation and the early Brixen period give way to longer, more theologically involved sermons preached mostly to a single congregation according to an ordinary cycle of biblical lessons throughout the church year.[85] He preached 147 sermons from January 1454 through June 1457, or roughly three times every four weeks. Most of them came on Sundays at Brixen. Out of the entire Brixen corpus of 167 sermons, 141 were delivered in the Brixen cathedral, and 124 during the same period from January 1454 to June 1457—a rate of roughly two sermons every three weeks. When he was not preaching in Brixen, he could be found delivering sermons in visitation of parochial churches throughout the diocese.[86] Such a volume of regular sermons delivered by a residential diocesan bishop in the fifteenth century was a notable exception, not the rule.[87] In this sense, he bears no resemblance to the popular mendicant preachers of the fifteenth century, such as Bernardino of Siena.[88] Furthermore, his

[84] He may have been preaching from earlier manuscripts during this period rather than composing new ones, according to Hundersmarck, "Preaching," 239.

[85] On the comparison of different stages in Cusanus's preaching, see Walter Andreas Euler "Entwicklungsgeschichte Etappen und Schwerpunktmässige Themenverschiebungen in den Sermones?" *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 30 (2005): 71–91.

[86] Preaching at visitation, as in both Cusanus's legation and Brixen, was expected of the visitor, C.R. Cheyney, *Episcopal Visitation of Monasteries in the Thirteenth Century*, 2nd ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), 62. According to Cusanus's itinerary during this period of three and a half years, he made approximately 40 visitations of religious houses or parochial churches, preaching sermons on seventeen of those, Georg Mutschlechner, "Itinerar des Nikolaus von Kues für Aufenthalt in Tirol," in *Cusanus Gedächtnisschrift*, 528–31.

[87] Taylor, *Soldiers of Christ*, 37. Taylor details the rise of popular preaching in the fifteenth century as an alternative to episcopal preaching. Cf. Ozment, *The Reformation in the Cities*, 40, who argues that the establishment of local preacherships at this time was an expression of "local dissatisfaction with the irregularity and low quality of preaching of the secular clergy."

[88] Cusanus had seen Bernardino of Siena preach as a student at Padua and in one of his own sermons describes the effect the popular mendicant had on his hearers, "Volo mundare," *Sermo* 264.3 (*h* XIX: 429). On Bernardino's preaching in Padua, see Mormando, *Preacher's Demons*, 1–40.

preaching allowed for what Euler calls an "uninterrupted catechesis to a circle of independent and relatively similar audiences."[89] This reform through catechesis is the precise counterweight that balances the seemingly acerbic legislative acts of the bishop.

Though one goal of the sermons was the spiritual renewal of the faithful through catechesis, it was not the sole end of the sermons. On the contrary, Cusanus used them as an important springboard for his thought and intended for them to be read beyond his diocese. The sermons themselves were delivered in the vernacular to the Tyrolese Germans, but in the distinct Mosel-dialect of the bishop's native region.[90] They were then recorded in Latin by his secretary, Peter of Erkelenz, presumably from Cusanus's notes.[91] He intimated as early as 1454 in correspondence with Bernard von Waging that he planned to publish the sermons at a later date.[92] Between 1455 and 1459, Cusanus would put his own hand to editing them.[93] From Rome in 1459, he sent the edited collection to Erkelenz appended to two treatises, *De aequalitate* and *De principio*. In the conclusion to *De aequalitate*, he includes a personal confession to Erkelenz that makes explicit reference to the relationship between his theology and his sermons.[94] Finally the

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[89] Euler, "Proclamation of Christ," 90.

[90] Euler, "Die Predigten des Nikolaus von Kues," 283.

[91] On Erkelenz, see Watanabe, *Companion*, 108–14.

[92] Letter of 16 August 1454: "De sermonibus meis propono librum facere," in Vansteenberghe, *Autour*, 140.

[93] Euler, "Entwicklungsgeschichte Etappen," 76, and Klaus Kremer, "Einführung in die Gesamtthematik," *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 30 (2005), 38.

[94] *De aequalitate* 49; English translation in Jasper Hopkins, ed. *Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Nicholas of Cusa*, 2 vols., trans. Jasper Hopkins (Minneapolis, MN: Arthur J. Banning Press, 2001), 2:865: "This is the heart of the gospel, a gospel which has been explained variously (in accordance with the grace given) in my different sermons attached below. [The gospel was explained by me] (1) less clearly when I began during my adolescence and when I was a deacon, (2) more clearly when I became a priest, and (3) still more perfectly, as it seems, when I assumed the office of bishop in my church at Brixen and when I exercised the authority of apostolic legate in Germany and elsewhere. Would that God should grant me to make further progress during my remaining lifetime, and grant me, at length, to embrace the Truth face to face, in eternal joy. Pray, O Brother, that He may indeed grant this. And if in any of the foregoing statements or in any of the sermons attached below or in any of my other writings there can be found anything that deviates from the Catholic truth, I renounce it and revoke it through the present words."

last writing of his life, 1464's *De apice theorie*, also features a similar note to Erkelenz, where Cusanus places the sermons alongside his other books as expressions of his theology.[95] What Cusanus delivered in the pulpit was not merely a means to the end of publication, but occupied an essential step in his intellectual process. The published Latin itself was the result of an editing process "emerging between the pulpit and the writing desk."[96] It stood somewhere between the ordinary "bread and butter" sermon of the parish priest as an "ante-oral" composition intended solely for preaching, and the more "high-theological" sermon of a Meister Eckhardt as a "post-oral" composition intended for circulation.[97] Cusanus's preaching was an end in its own right, but it was also an impetus for the development of metaphysical ideas that eventuated in the publication of his philosophical-theological tracts.[98]

The sermons themselves then represent significant expressions of his theology and provide important clues to his development during the crucial Brixen years. While Cusanus retained a high level of intellectual productivity during the first two years of his episcopacy and would resume that again his last year (especially from his seclusion in Castle Andraz), the period from late 1453 to 1458 stands out in his career for the complete absence of any published theological or philosophical treatises. He consumed himself instead with the tasks of diocesan

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[95] *De apice theorie* 16.4; Hopkins, 2:1431: "Therefore, my dearly beloved Peter, with keen directedness turn your mind's eye to this secret, and with this analysis enter into my writings and into whatever other writings you read, and occupy yourself especially with my books and sermons—particularly with *The Gift of Light* [*De Dato Patris Luminum*] which, if rightly understood in accordance with the preceding remarks, contains the same thing as this present book."

[96] Heinrich Pauli, "Die geistige Welt der Brixener Predigten des Nikolaus von Kues," *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 22 (1995), 175.

[97] Volker Mertens, "Predigt des Nikolaus von Kues im Kontext der Volkssprachlichen Kanzelrede," *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 30 (2005), 189.

[98] Mertens, "Predigt des Nikolaus von Kues im Kontext," 190: "Die implizite Aufforderung zur Diskurvität, die die Predigtsituation bedingt, wirkt als Impuls zum Schreiben, zum Entwickeln und Formulieren."

administration, episcopal care, reform, and above all preaching.[99] In this light, the sermons provide the most concrete evidence of the crucial theological deliberations emerging from the crucible of the Brixen episcopacy. They embody what Cusanus would call a *theologia sermocinalis*—a view of theology as inherently discursive, verbal, even oral. The term, inherited from the late medieval debates between the *via antiqua* and the *via moderna*, gives voice to his mystical conception of theology by the time he becomes bishop of Brixen.[100] Preaching at Brixen provided him with an opportunity to support his practical reform efforts with theological justification, and the theological shape those sermons take would have a reciprocal effect on his reforms and thought as the time in Brixen comes to a close and he takes up the same task again in Rome.

The development of the theological content in the sermons and its relationship to Cusanus's broader thought are uncertain to a degree, precisely because there is such diversity within the corpus itself. Even during the Brixen period, the sermons evolved methodologically, from the scholastic-thematic approach to a simpler, exegetically oriented one.[101] The lengths correspondingly range widely, from the short reform homilies like those of the legation to the more extended treatments that resemble his earliest sermons. He most often preached on the Gospel for the day and would regularly exposit it verse-by-verse. At times, the sermons were

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[99] Koch, *Cusanus-Texte I/2–5: Predigten*, 185; Euler, "Proclamation of Christ," 90, and Hundersmarck, "Preaching," 239, agree with this assessment.

[100] On the origins and use of *theologia sermocinalis*, see Peter J. Casarella, "Language and *Theologia sermocinalis* in Nicholas of Cusa's *Idiota de sapientia* (1450)," in *Old and New in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Clyde Lee Miller (Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1993), 131–42, and Karl-Hermann Kandler, "*Theologia mystica – theologia facilis – theologia sermocinalis* bei Nikolaus von Kues," in *Historia Philosophiae Medii Aevi: Studien zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, 2 vols., ed. Burkhard Mojsisch and Olif Pluta (Amsterdam: B.R. Grüner, 1991), 1:467–76.

[101] Euler, "Die Predigten des Nikolaus von Kues," 285. On the general late medieval trend away from the expansive scholastic *ars praedicandi* methodology of preaching toward a more patristic, even humanist-influenced approach that resulted in shorter exegetical homilies, see Spencer, *English Preaching*, 228–68. As O'Malley argues, however, Cusanus's sermons depart significantly from the humanists in both his allegorical interpretation of Scripture and his disinterest in rhetorical concerns, O'Malley, *Praise and Blame*, 94–101.

more catechetical in nature and might focus on the Lord's Prayer or one of the creeds. His 1455 sermon at the annual Brixen festival of dedication is a catechetical exposition of the *Pater noster*, while he preached on Christ's return to judgment in the Nicene Creed during a 1455 Advent Sunday and on the *Quicunque vult* during his 1456 Trinity sermon.[102] He might even begin with a liturgical proper for the day. Such instances include hymns for Good Friday 1452 or Corpus Christi 1457, the gradual for Pentecost 1457 or Holy Cross 1456 in Säben, or the proper preface for Judica 1456.[103] While the sermons are typically expositions of the appointed texts, he could also present the sermon as a dialogue. He does this in his 1457 Good Friday homily, where the Brixen church, the Apostle John, and Mary converse over the nature of the crucifixion and what it means for their salvation.[104] The texts for some sermons are largely based on model sermon collections and others are original compositions addressing pertinent theological or ecclesiastical concerns.

There are several more obvious developments in the sermons that manifest important changes in his thought and will come to bear on his views of church and reform. One of those is the sources he employs in his preaching. Cusanus gives pride of place to Augustine and Aquinas, which puts him on common ground with a great preponderance of medieval preachers. Beyond them, however, his favored source during the earlier Brixen years is the model sermon collection of Aldobrandinus of Tuscanella, a thirteenth-century Dominican.[105] In sermons covering the

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[102] "Domus mea donus orationis vocabitur," *Sermo* 198 (*h* XVIII: 427–32); "Iterum venturus est iudicare," *Sermo* 210 (*h* XIX: 31–39); "Trinitatem in unitate veneremur," *Sermo* 233 (*h* XIX: 186–88).

[103] "Agnus in crucis," *Sermo* 122 (*h* XVIII: 1–10); "Pange, lingua, gloriosi corporis mysticum," *Sermo* 286 (*h* XIX: 638–40); "Allelua. Veni, Sancte Spiritus," *Sermo* 285 (*h* XIX: 630–37); "Crucifixus resurrexit," *Sermo* 245 (*h* XIX: 274–78); "Salutem humani generis," *Sermo* 225 (*h* XIX: 138–42).

[104] "Crucifixus etiam pro nobis," *Sermo* 278 (*h* XIX: 567–79).

[105] Heinrich Pauli, "Die Aldobrandinuszitate in den Predigten des Nikolaus von Kues and die Brixener Aldobrandinusbandschrift," *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 19 (1991): 163–82.

period from April 1452 to September 1455, fifteen of 81 cite him, many extensively. Aldobrandinus appears again in a flurry of references between November 1455 and March 1456, cited in nine out of sixteen sermons. Then he entirely vanishes from the remaining 64 sermons preached at Brixen between March 1456 and September 1458, save for a single citation. Cusanus's use of Aldobrandinus increases as the length and style of his sermons expand during the first two years of regular preaching, but then an entirely different shift occurs in the later Brixen period. Thereafter, the primary sources for sermon citations become Pseudo-Dionysius, Albert the Great, and Meister Eckhart.[106] As the next chapter will detail, the debates Cusanus engages over mystical theology in conjunction with the new stimulus he receives from the 1453 acquisition of Albert the Great's commentaries on Pseudo-Dionysius will become formative in the development of his later sermons.

This development in sources parallels a shift in the terminology for church and reform that he employs during the same period. Two concepts in particular come to the fore during the Brixen sermons, beginning early in 1456 and prevailing throughout the remainder of his tenure and into the Roman period: *corpus mysticum* and *christiformitas*. Statistically speaking, the two terms increase in close relation to one another. Reference to the church as *corpus mysticum* becomes prominent during a roughly six-month stretch from Lent through August of 1456.[107] The mystical body metaphor occurs in eight of seventeen sermons over this time, often with extensive exposition, and then appears rather scantly over the remainder of the Brixen period with a few notable exceptions. Cusanus then reincorporates it substantially in the 1459 *Reformatio generalis*. Despite the relative absence in the later Brixen sermons, he does

[106] For the literature on these sources, see chapter three, n. 14.

[107] Interestingly enough, his first extensive discussion of *corpus mysticum* occurs in the second half of the same sermon where he had punctuated his use of Aldobrandinus in the first half. "Haec est voluntas Dei," *Sermo* 223 (*h* XIX: 127–36).

infrequently make passing mention to it and to related ideas throughout, and these various treatments augment the picture from the early 1456 discussions. A similar uptick in *christiformitas* appearances come at roughly the same time. Though *christiformitas* occurs only 96 times in the searchable corpus of Cusanus's works, 83 of those come in his 293 total sermons, 67 in the 167 Brixen sermons, and a remarkable 55 in the 88 sermons from August 1455 to July 1457. The term itself took a greater significance in the sermons of the mid-1440s as a result of his deliberations over filiation and theosis, but it will become a central metaphor for personal reform as the Brixen period wears on before reaching its culmination in the Roman sermons and reform proposal of 1459.[108]

The relation of these two terms reprises an image pregnant in both Cusanus's conciliar *De concordantia catholica* and his papal *De docta ignorantia* that Sullivan considers the basis for his understanding of church reform: "In sum, the church as the body of Christ finds its proper form and ultimate model in Christ, from whom the grace necessary for salvation flows through the hierarchical church to the faithful."[109] The presence of those reform ideas forms the core of the early *De concordantia catholica*, but takes an altogether different shape by his later *Reformatio generalis*. The remainder of this study will locate the missing nexus in the Brixen sermons. In the face of opposition from inside and outside his bishopric, Cusanus will creatively mine important resources from the medieval mystical and Christian Neoplatonic traditions and use the Brixen pulpit as a threshing floor to shape a different relationship between ecclesiology and reform. He will apply these new ideas to various contexts in his reform efforts, including monastic visitation, clerical synods and chapters, and the early Roman synod and visitations,

[108] Euler, "Entwicklungsgeschichte Etappen," 87.

[109] Sullivan, "Cusanus and Pastoral Renewal," 166. Others agree, including Euler, *Cusanus und die Reform*, 12, and Weier, "Christus als 'Haupt'," 167.

before bringing them together in his reform proposal of 1459. It is necessary first to understand better what this relationship of *corpus mysticum* and *christiformitas* is and how he gets there.

CHAPTER THREE

IMAGES OF CHURCH AND REFORM IN THE BRIXEN SERMONS

Nicholas of Cusa progressively unfolded his concepts of church and reform in the Brixen period through his sermons. They in turn provide an important complement to the more predominant scholarly emphasis on his official reform acts. Extracting such concepts from sermons can prove problematic because preaching is not necessarily the context for explicating doctrines about the church, nor for detailing a program of reform. Gerhart Ladner's methodology offers a helpful paradigm from which to begin.[1] He contends that the study of reform is best approached by starting with a lexical account of the ideas expressed in service of reform since they reveal the basic ideology of the particular reformer. His most important work surveyed the comparative reform ideas of the Christian East and Christian West in the church's first millennium, arguing that the early Christian concept of reform was concerned mostly with the personal dimension of spiritual renewal according to the image and likeness of God. In later works, Ladner and numerous first- and second-generation students of reform ideology pursued the corporate dimension of those ideas as they were applied to the church in the eleventh-century Gregorian reforms, twelfth-century monastic reforms, fourteenth- and fifteenth-century devotional reforms, and the conciliar reforms and reformers of the fifteenth century. One fruitful augmentation might be a more rigorous account of the relationship between ecclesiology and reform ideas. Advocates of Ladner's methodology have said as much. Louis Pascoe argues that

[1] For the literature on Ladner and reform idea methodology, see chapter one, n. 74 and n. 75.

church reform "both in its personal and institutional dimensions necessarily involves some concept of what a church should be" and Karl Frech has followed him in claiming that church reform is "always bound up with—and dependent on—the ecclesiological conceptions of the reformer."[2]

The relationship between Cusanus's images of church and reform reflects this well. Many of the lexical concepts he employs follow important patristic and medieval lineages in the reform ideology literature, including the reform of the church in head and members (*reformatio in capite et membris*), the heavenly church and primitive church as images for ecclesiastical reform, personal renewal according to the image of God in fallen man, and Christ as exemplar for personal reform. The relationship between these broad categories of ecclesiastical and personal reform ideas in Cusanus, however, demands more study. Cusanus's early conciliar reforms have received attention for the relationship between his conciliar ecclesiology and his specific reform efforts, but there has been less concentration on how his later reform efforts derive from his concept of the church.[3] Of late, scholarship has begun addressing this lacuna, often with recourse to the sermons themselves.[4] These inquiries into the interdependence of Cusanus's concepts of church and reform have underscored the highly nuanced character of such ideas in his preaching, the importance of his larger metaphysics and mystical thought for their development, and the necessity of treating them in the context of his later ecclesiastical and reformatory experiences.

The present chapter builds upon these studies by examining the concepts of church and reform in the Brixen sermons and the relationship between them as foundational for

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[2] Pascoe, "'Ecclesia Primitiva'," 379, and Frech, *Reform*, 16.

[3] See the literature cited in chapter one, n. 39.

[4] See the literature cited in chapter one, n. 51, n. 52, and n. 72.

understanding the *ad status* reform sermons delivered in both Brixen and Rome.[5] The two central reform ideas he employs in this connection are *corpus mysticum*, or the church as mystical body, and *christiformitas*, or personal reform through conformity to Christ. First, this chapter will detail some basic historical and intellectual circumstances that might account for the increased usage of these two concepts in the Brixen sermons, in particular the debates over mystical theology that led to Cusanus's intensive revisiting of Pseudo-Dionysius. The subsequent two sections will explain the many ways Cusanus uses the terms *corpus mysticum* and *christiformitas* through a lexical analysis of their complex dimensions, contexts, and interrelationships, while underscoring how they complement one another. Finally, it will by way of summary suggest how the Dionysian understanding of hierarchy and participation provides Cusanus with the conceptual apparatus needed to relate these concepts and creatively apply them to church reform.

Corpus Mysticum, *Christiformitas*, and Pseudo-Dionysius

The central lexical motifs of *corpus mysticum* and *christiformitas* emerge as principles of church and reform in the Brixen-era sermons. Neither of these images is new to Cusanus's later thought or to his sermons. They appeared in tandem as early as the conciliar treatise *De concordantia catholica*. In the last chapter of Book II, appended to an earlier version of the tome along with Book III in late 1433, he uses the two terms to summarize his treatment of ecclesiology in Book I, describing the church as a "Christ-formed (*christiform*) body of the faithful in which Christ will dwell."[6] A few years later, after his conversion to the council

[5] This chapter has specific limitations in scope. First, it will apply Ladner's lexically focused methodology for studying reform ideas to the two primary images of church and reform, *corpus mysticum* and *christiformitas*, and related concepts. Second, it will concern almost exclusively sermons preached in the Brixen cathedral, as opposed to those in subsequent chapters dealing with specific reform contexts. Third, it will not analyze the sermons extensively or in their context, but rather will incorporate only the material relevant to the discussion at hand.

[6] *DCC* II.247 (*h* XIV: 290). The English translation is found in *The Catholic Concordance*, ed. and trans. Paul E. Sigmund (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 193.

minority at Basel and his shipboard experience on the way back from Constantinople, he again treats the terms in close proximity in *De docta ignorantia*. In chapter eleven of Book III, *christiformitas* takes a central role as the means for mystical union with Christ.[7] The subsequent chapter on the church then details how the church is a mystical body first in relation to the church militant, which exists in fundamental harmony and unity despite diversity, and second in relation to the church triumphant, which will be mystically united with Christ, and through Christ all of its members united one to another.[8] As noted in the previous chapter, however, over the course of the Brixen sermons the two terms return to prominence and are brought back into relation with one another in increasing frequency, beginning in late 1455 before culminating in their extensive use throughout the 1459 reform proposal.

What led Cusanus to excavate terms somewhat dormant in his theological vocabulary at roughly the same time, especially in light of their important role and mutual relatedness in the earlier writings? Why would he need to resurrect older terminology for church reform at such a late date in his career, terminology that would form the basis for his comprehensive reform effort at Rome only a few years subsequent? There are several documentable historical factors during the years 1455 and 1456 that merit consideration.[9] The conflict with the Sonnenburg convent

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[7] *DDI* III.11, 252 (*h* I: 157). The English translation is found in *Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Nicholas of Cusa*, 2 vols., ed. and trans. Jasper Hopkins (Minneapolis, MN: Arthur J. Banning Press, 2001), 144: "Assuredly, the power of faith is great: it makes a man Christlike [*christiformem*], so that he abandons perceptible things, divests himself of the contaminating things of the flesh, walks in the ways of God with reverence, follows the steps of Christ with joy, willingly bears a cross with exaltation—so that he exists in the flesh as a spirit for whom (on account of Christ) this world is death and for whom removal from this world (in order to be with Christ) is life."

[8] *DDI* III.12, 256 (*h* I: 158); Hopkins, 146. In Cusanus's introduction to chapter twelve, he begins by stating that the preceding section had already treated ecclesiology, suggesting again the relationship between the two ideas, *DDI* III.12, 254 (*h* I: 158); Hopkins, 145.

[9] One event slightly prior to this period but also worth considering is the role of the fall of Constantinople, which was felt throughout the Western church and stimulated Cusanus's own 1453 *De pace fidei*. On Cusanus's participation in the broader ecclesiopolitical reaction to the crisis, see Erich Meuthen, "Nikolaus von Kues auf dem Regensburger Reichstag 1454," in *Festschrift für Hermann Heimpel zum 70.Geburtstag am 19. September 1971*, 2 vols., ed. Mitarbeitern des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1972),

reached its most volatile pitch with the summer 1455 excommunication of Verena von Stubben. The friendly Augustinian canons of Neustift became caught in the tensions between Cusanus and Sigismund in early 1456, leading to their opposition of the planned visitation and the excommunication of their prior. The controversy over Simon von Wehlen's appointment as Brixen cathedral prebendary began in May 1456 and lasted the remainder of the year. There was also the election of the Catalan pope, Calixtus III, to replace Cusanus's good friend, Nicholas V. The new pope took sides against Cusanus on numerous occasions, including Verena's excommunication, the Sonnenburg reforms, and the obstruction of Wehlen's appointment. Such traumatic events could have plausibly led to a reconsideration of his approach to church reform.

While each of these circumstances may indeed have some causal relationship with Cusanus's shift in concepts of reform, another is more readily substantiated from the historical record: the controversy over mystical theology beginning a decade prior to his arrival in Brixen and continuing well into his tenure there. The debate started when Heidelberg theologian Johannes Wenck wrote a scathing critique of Cusanus's *De docta ignorantia* in 1442, accusing him of pantheism. Cusanus responded in kind with his 1449 *Apologia doctae ignorantiae*, defending himself against those charges with extensive recourse to both Pseudo-Dionysius and Meister Eckhart.[10] When he embarked on his legatine journey in 1450, the controversy resumed, with new critics emerging in Munich priest Maquard Spregner, Melk Benedictine Johannes Schlitpacher, and Austrian Carthusian Vincent von Aggsbach.[11] He would find supportive allies

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2:482–99. On the origins of *De pace fidei* and its contribution to the discussion, see Thomas M. Izbicki, "The Possibility of Dialogue with Islam in the Fifteenth Century," in *Nicholas of Cusa: In Search of God and Wisdom*, 175–83.

[10] On these developments in Cusanus's mystical theology, see Donald Duclow, "Mystical Theology and the Intellect in Nicholas of Cusa," *American Catholic Philosophial Quarterly* 64 (1990): 11–29, and Donald Duclow, "Nicholas of Cusa and Meister Eckhart: Codex Cusanus 21," in *Nicholas of Cusa: In Search of God and Wisdom*, 57–69.

[11] A general introduction to the terms of this debate is found in Jasper Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa's Dialectical*

in the Benedictine monks of Tegernsee, whose prior, Bernard von Waging, had written an elegy for *De docta ignorantia* in 1452. The Benedictine brothers requested more clarity on his mystical views, chiefly the relationship between positive and negative theology.[12] In response to their query, Cusanus drafted his 1453 treatise on mystical theology, *De visione Dei*. The cordial relations he established with the brothers would continue throughout his time in Brixen, as they would carry on extensive correspondence, serve him in visitation of Benedictine houses in his own diocese, and even lead the bishop to suggest he might retire to the contemplative life in their house one day.[13]

This correspondence with the Tegernsee monks, in conjunction with the sermons of this period, reveals that Cusanus undertook a fairly extensive revisiting of prominent theological sources pertinent to the debate. It would include readings in the fifth-century Neoplatonist, Proclus; the ninth-century mediator of Platonism, John Scotus Eriugena; the thirteenth-century Parisian master, Albert the Great; the fourteenth-century mystic, Meister Eckhart; and above all the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius.[14] It is Cusanus's use of Pseudo-Dionysius that becomes most

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Mysticism: Text, Translation, and Interpretive Study of De Visione Dei (Minneapolis: Arthur J. Banning Press, 1985), 3–19. See also Walter Beierwaltes, "Mystische Elemente in Denken des Cusanus," in *Deutsche Mystik im abendländischen Zusammenhang: neu erschlossene Texte, neue methodische Ansätze, neue theoretische Konzepte*, ed. Walter Haug und Wolfram Schneider-Lastin (Tübingen: Niemayer, 2000), 425–48.

[12] The correspondence is contained in Vansteenberghe, *Autour*, 107–62.

[13] On Cusanus's relationship with Tegernssee, see Watanabe, *Concord and Reform*, 155–68.

[14] On the influence of these various thinkers, see Ludwig Bauer, *Cusanus-Texte III/1: Nicolaus Cusanus und Ps. Dionysius im Lichte der Zitate und Randbemerkungen des Cusanus* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1940); Elizabeth Brient, "Meister Eckhart's Influence on Nicholas of Cusa: A Survey of the Literature," in *A Companion to Meister Eckhart*, ed. Jeremiah M. Hackett (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2013), 533–85; Edward F. Cranz, "Nicholas Cusanus and Dionysius Areopagita," in *Nicholas of Cusa and the Renaissance*, ed. Thomas M. Izbicki and Gerald Christianson (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2000), 109–36; Duclow, "Nicholas of Cusa and Meister Eckhary," 57–69; Stefanie Frost, *Nikolaus von Kues und Meister Eckhart: Rezeption im Spiegel der Marginalien zum Opus Tripartitum Meister Eckharts* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2006); Rudolf Haubst, "Albert, wie Cusanus ihn sah," in *Albertus Magnus, Doctor Universalis: 1280–1980*, ed. Gerbert Meyer and Albert Zimmerman (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1980), 167–94; and Rudolf Haubst, "Zum Fortleben Alberts des Großen: Bei Heymerich von Kamp und Nikolaus von Kues," in *Studia Albertina: Festschrift für Bernhard Geyer zum 70. Geburtstage*, ed. Heinrich Ostlende (Münster: Aschendorff, 1952), 420–47.

prominent. In *Apologia doctae ignorantiae*, he identifies the Areopagite as the chief influence on his thought after the return from Constantinople in 1437, claiming that he had not read him directly prior to that despite the various Dionysian citations throughout his *De concordantia catholica*. Beginning in 1452, upon arrival at Brixen, he would devote himself to the study of the corpus with greater attention.[15] More importantly still, in August 1453, Cusanus received a copy of Albert the Great's commentaries on Pseudo-Dionysius, including *De caelestia hierarchia*, *De divinis nominibus*, and *De mystica theologia*.[16] Haubst underscores the fact that Albert's commentaries provided "many new impulses for his thought" and the sermons of 1455 and 1456 are "thoroughgoing witnesses to how intensively" he engaged the text and internalized it.[17] This study of Albert's Dionysian writings also led Cusanus back to the sources themselves and the result was an extensive reworking of his own philosophical conceptions that would culminate in important changes in some of his later publications, such as *De beryllo* (1458), *De possest* (1460), *De non aliud* (1462), *De venatione sapientiae* (1462) and *De apice theorie* (1464).[18]

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[15] Bauer, *Nicolaus Cusanus und Ps. Dionysius*, 17.

[16] Bauer, *Nicolaus Cusanus und Ps. Dionysius* 16, and Rudolf Haubst, "Albert, wie Cusanus ihn sah," 181. While Cusanus did not have Albert's commentary on the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchies*, he did have his own copy of Traversari's 1436 translation of the Dionysian treatise that Tommaso Parentucelli—the future Pope Nicholas V—gave him in 1443. On this, see Martin Honecker, *Nikolaus von Cues und die griechische Sprache* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1938), 26, and Vansteenberghe, *Cardinal Nicolas de Cues*, 12.

[17] Haubst, "Albert," 190. Haubst details Cusanus's explicit use of the commentaries of Albert and how the mystical debates aroused his interest during the period in question, Haubst, "Zum Fortleben Alberts," 420–47.

[18] No extensive discussion of Pseudo-Dionysius's influence on Cusanus is possible here. The literature is vast. For more recent treatments with extensive bibliographic information, see Peter J. Casarella, "Cusanus on Dionysius: The Turn to Speculative Theology," in *Re-thinking Dionysius the Areopagite*, ed. Sarah Coakley and Charles M. Stang (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 137–48; David Luscombe, "Denys the Pseudo-Areopagite in the Writings of Nicholas of Cusa, Marsilio Ficino, and Pico della Mirandola," in *Néoplatonisme et philosophie medieval*, ed. Linos G. Benakis (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 93–107; Hans Gerhard Senger, "Die Präferenz für Ps.-Dionysius bei Nicolaus Cusanus und Seinem Italienischen Umfeld," in *Die Dionysius-Rezeption im Mittelalter*, ed. Tzotcho Biadjiev, Georgi Kapriev, and Andreas Speer (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 505–539; Matthieu Van der Meer, "*Divus Dionysius*: Jean Gerson, Nicholas of Cusa, and the Interpretation of Pseudo-Dionysius's Mystical Theology," *Viator* 44 (2013): 323–42; and Pauline Moffitt Watts, "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and Three Renaissance Neoplatonists: Cusanus, Ficino, and Pico on Mind and Cosmos," in *Supplementum Festivum: Studies in Honor of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, ed. James Hankins, John Monfasani, and Frederick Purnell, Jr. (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1987), 279–98.

These works all reflect his reconsideration of the Dionysian metaphysical tradition and his attempt to configure a new definition of the relationship between God and being that would free him from Platonism.[19]

The influence on his sermons is somewhat less evident, yet it remains just as significant for his development. By the time Cusanus begins to focus more closely on the *corpus mysticum* and *christiformitas* images, his sermons are filled with direct and indirect references to Pseudo-Dionysius and his commentator, Albert.[20] Though the Areopagite's corpus provides Cusanus with any number of important ideas regarding mystical theology, the Eucharist, deification, the church, and the like, what may in fact be most pertinent to the concepts of church and reform articulated in the Brixen sermons is the basic Dionysian account of hierarchy and participation.[21] In this scheme, the celestial and ecclesiastical hierarchies are descending ranks or orders of beings (the celestial comprised of angelic beings, the ecclesiastical of clergy) through which God purges, illuminates, and perfects humans. The goal of this purgation, illumination, and perfection is participation in God, or theosis, by way of imitation. The most concise statement of this comes

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[19] Edward Cranz has made this a central point in his argument regarding Cusanus's later philosophical development. See the various essays in Cranz, *Nicholas of Cusa and the Renaissance*, including "Development in Cusanus," 1–18, "The Late Works of Nicholas of Cusa," 43–60, "Nicolaus Cusanus and Dionysius Areopagita," 109–36," and " The Transmutation of Platonism in the Development of Nicolaus Cusanus and of Martin Luther," 169–94.

[20] To take but one example, the indices for volume eighteen of the Heidelberg *Opera Omnia*, covering the sermons from Cusanus's 1452 arrival in Brixen to 7 September 1455, record citations of Pseudo-Dionysius's *Celestial Hierarchies* only once and the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* only twice. Volume nineteen, covering the remainder of his sermons from September 1455 onward, records twenty-one references to those two works.

[21] This study again cannot engage the extensive literature on Pseudo-Dionysius's hierarchies. The primary commentary on the treatises and letters is Paul Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius: A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to Their Influence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). The present argument follows the basic framework laid out by Edward Mahoney in several essays on the Dionysian hierarchies in medieval and Renaissance thought, in particular, Edward P. Mahoney, "Pseudo-Dionysius's Conception of Metaphysical Hierarchy and Its Influence on Medieval Philosophy," in *Die Dionysius-Rezeption im Mittelalter*, 429–475; and Edward P. Mahoney, "Metaphysical Foundations of the Hierarchy of Being according to Some Late Medieval and Renaissance Philosophers," in *Philosophies of Existence: Ancient and Modern*, ed. Parviz Morewedge (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), 165–257.

from *Celestial Hierarchy*: "In my opinion a hierarchy is a sacred order, a state of understanding and an activity approximating as closely as possible to the divine. And it is uplifted to the imitation of God in proportion to the enlightenments divinely given to it...The goal of a hierarchy, then, is to enable beings to be as like as possible to God and be at one with him."[22] Later in the same chapter of *Celestial Hierarchy* the relationship is made between the hierarchy and the means of purification, illumination, and perfection:

> If one talks then of hierarchy, what is meant is a certain perfect arrangement, an image of the beauty of God which sacredly works out the mysteries of its own enlightenment in the orders and levels of understanding of the hierarchy, and which is likened toward its own source as much as is permitted. Indeed for every member of the hierarchy, perfection consists in this, that it is uplifted to imitate God as far as possible and, more wonderful still, that it becomes what scripture calls a "fellow workman for God," and a reflection of the workings of God. Therefore when the hierarchic order lays it on some to be purified and on others to do the purifying, on some to receive illumination and on others to cause the illumination, on some to be perfect and on others to bring about perfection, each will actually imitate God in the way suitable to whatever role it has.[23]

The hierarchy exists for the purpose of enabling all orders of beings to imitate God. It provides symbols, chiefly liturgical, but also ecclesiastical, as the means for ascending the hierarchy toward knowledge of God and participation in him.[24] What this illuminative function of the hierarchical order and the perfecting function of imitation give Cusanus is the conceptual apparatus for an increasingly mystical approach to church reform. He can now incorporate the *corpus mysticum* as image of the church in a hierarchical way that does not subordinate ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy to one another categorically, but instrumentally as the means through

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[22] *Celestial Hierarchy* III.1–2. English translation is from *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 153–54.

[23] *Celestial Hierarchy* III.2; Luibheid, 154.

[24] Mahoney, "Pseudo-Dionysius's Conception of Metaphysical Hierarchy," 431: "Dionysius defines hierarchy in such fashion that it involves a dynamic concept of the relations among superior and inferiors in the angelic hierarchy and in the structure of the Church. Hierarchy involves in particular the mediation of angels in passing down to humans illuminations that the lower angels received from the higher angels and that the highest angels received directly from God. And in Dionysius;s account of the Church and its relation to the angelic hierarchy it is also noteworthy that the very term "Hierarch" is applied by Dionysius to the Bishop and also at times to Christ,"

which illumination comes. Likewise, he is now able to frame *christiformitas* as an image of personal reform through which all levels of the hierarchy perfect themselves by conforming to Christ as a means of imitating and participating in the divine. Should this relationship between hierarchy and participation bear itself out in the Brixen sermons, it would help explain how the papalist cardinal Cusanus applies concepts so often construed as authoritarian to the reform of the papacy in 1459 without a hint of contradiction or insubordination.[25]

Corpus Mysticum as Image of the Church

The role of the *corpus mysticum* as organic metaphor for the church has received much attention in scholarship concerning medieval ecclesiology broadly and Cusanus in particular.[26] The divergences of opinion on the topic have revolved around the degree to which the mystical body represented a corporatist-egalitarian metaphor or a hierarchic-monarchical metaphor, and in the context of late medieval ecclesiology whether pope or council more directly represented the universal *corpus mysticum*. These ecclesiopolitical concerns are far removed in the Brixen sermons. Due to the nature of the medium, his goal is less theological exposition of ecclesiology than spiritual reform of the faithful. Nevertheless, there are common patterns in his use of the metaphor that manifest deeper ecclesiological assumptions and provide a basis for understanding the church not in juridical or structural terms, but in salvific and mystical terms. He presents the *corpus mysticum* as a mystical hierarchy oriented in Dionysian fashion toward union with Christ

[25] It is not the intent of this study to substantiate the influence of Pseudo-Dionysius on the concepts of church and reform in Cusanus's sermons. The provisional thesis suggested here rests upon two assumptions: 1) that the cited literature from Bauer, Haubst, Cranz, et al., concerning the significance of Pseudo-Dionysius for Cusanus's later thought is accurate; and 2) despite lacking specific discussions of Pseudo-Dionysius's concept of hierarchy in the sermons, Cusanus's broad use of Areopagite thought—and that of similar thinkers—during the Brixen period reflects his ongoing engagement with the corpus as a whole and with ideas that would include the hierarchies. The former is no stretch, but the latter requires some good faith absent a more extensive study of citations from the relevant hierarchical treatises in his sermons.

[26] On this literature, see chapter one, n. 77 and n. 78.

as its head. In this scheme, the clergy aid the faithful through their illuminative function by revealing Christ in the Scriptures so that the members might attain the beatific vision and be transferred from the church militant to the church triumphant. There are several pertinent ecclesiological categories that the organic metaphor highlights: the composition of the church as mystical body with reference to the identity of head and members; the hierarchical ordering and illuminative function of the clergy within the mystical body; the relationship between the church militant, church triumphant, and beatific vision sketched in the terms of mystical theology; and the largely vertical, corporate divisions within the church.

Church as Mystical Body

The image of the church as a mystical body is not a new metaphor for the later Cusanus. He had used it extensively in *De concordantia catholica*, even connecting it with Dionysian hierarchical language to emphasize the unity and harmony possible within the church despite its unequal members. The head of the body is Christ and all the constituting members were arranged hierarchically in relation to him.[27] He parsed the *corpus mysticum* in a tripartite fashion as spirit, soul, and body, where the sacraments are the spirit, the priesthood the soul, and the faithful the body.[28] The pope is a member, not the head of the body.[29] Disorder in the church arises when members arrogate powers to themselves that are not rightly their own.[30] The metaphor then takes on a somewhat different significance with *De docta ignorantia*. Cusanus is no longer concerned with the governmental structure of the church as an organic entity, but instead subordinates hierarchical concerns to mystical concerns. The relative unity of the members in the church

[27] *DCC* I.4 (*h* XIV: 29); Sigmund, 5.

[28] *DCC* I.34 (*h* XIV: 55); Sigmund, 23.

[29] *DCC* II.156 (*h* XIV: 190); Sigmund, 118.

[30] *DCC* II.214 (*h* XIV: 254); Sigmund, 164.

militant will ultimately give way to the maximal unity of each member with Christ in the church triumphant.[31] He extends this several years later in the important *Letter to Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo*, arguing that the mystical body as church militant and all of its offices and members—pope included—are understood in a provisional, conjectural way according to the senses, whereas the *vera ecclesia* as church triumphant exists in the virtues of faith, hope, and love that attain to eternal blessedness through the grace of Christ.[32] Though the organic metaphor is used sparsely elsewhere throughout Cusanus's other sermons and treatises into the early Brixen period, it takes on renewed emphasis in the highly pivotal six months from February to August of 1456. This marked uptick lays the foundation for important considerations regarding the mystical nature of the church and its hierarchical role in mediating salvation to the faithful.

In broad outline, the image of the mystical body in the Brixen sermons comes to represent a church neither strictly corporatist-egalitarian nor strictly hierarchical-monarchical, but instead mystical-salvific. While it is hierarchical, the hierarchy itself functions along the lines of Pseudo-Dionysius, where the priesthood provides sacramental mediation "downward" to the faithful in order that those same faithful might ascend "upward" toward union with Christ.[33] Like *De concordantia catholica*, Christ is the head, not Peter or his successors. There are hierarchical gradations within the mystical body, but they are produced and united by the same Spirit and their diversity is consequent to their unity. Moreover, the goal of these gradations is mystical

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[31] *DDI* III.12, 260 (*h* I: 161); Hopkins, 149.

[32] *Epistula ad Rodericum Sancium de Arevalo*, 3–6 (*h* XV: 5–8). For an English translation of this letter, see Izbicki, *Writings on Church and Reform*, 430–49. A similar argument to this is made in Cusanus's first Brixen sermon, where he describes the church in conjectural terms as a mystical body, which is a specific application of the larger notion that all humanity is enfolded in Christ as its apotheosis and perfection, and unfolded from him to the end that all humans might embody his virtue, "Agnus in crucis," *Sermo* 122.13 (*h* XVIII: 9).

[33] Stump parses the mystical body imagery of late medieval concilarism in two directions: a corporatist use that emphasizes unity within the body and a Dionysian approach that understands it as hierarchically flowing from the head to the body, Stump, *Council of Constance*, 239–45. For Cusanus, however, the two dimensions are not mutually exclusive, but complementary.

ascent to union with Christ, finally achieved at the beatific vision when the church militant is transferred to the church triumphant. It is the priesthood that illuminates the faithful by opening the Scriptures and proclaiming Christ (*evangelizare Christum*) so that the faithful in turn might become *christiform* and attain salvation. The church militant, however, remains a *corpus permixtum* threatened by those who oppose the teaching of Christ.

There are several constituting features of this image. First, Cusanus with but one exception identifies Christ as the head of the mystical body.[34] He approaches this in different ways. In one instance, the mystical body is ordered intellectively and Christ is "head of the church or school of reason."[35] The church is the means by which rational souls attain knowledge of the church's head, Christ, and adoption as sons of God. Christ unites the church through the Spirit, who pervades it and brings the individual members to knowledge of him.[36] Another sermon uses more explicitly monarchical language. Christ is the "rector or captain" who by his word "vivifies, moves, rules, and orders all things, which are vivified and preserved and exercised for the whole and the individual." He is also the "spiritual captain who administers" this word through the Spirit so that the operations of the diverse members might indeed accomplish the good of whole and individual alike.[37]

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[34] The sole exception is found in *Sermo* 287. For discussion, see below.

[35] On the role of this image in Cusanus's thought, see Maarten J.F.M. Hoenen "*Caput scholae rationis est Christus*: Verschränkung von Exegese und Philosophie in den Predigten des Cusanus," *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 30 (2005): 43–68.

[36] "Missus est Gabriel," *Sermo* 226.16, 1–15 (*h* XIX: 148): "Caput autem ecclesiae seu scholae rationis est magister unus, scilicet Christus, qui influit spiritum in rationem credentium, qui spiritus est ut fons aquae vivae, ut ipse ait. Nullus alius magister reperitur, qui de suo spiritu vivificante communicet credentibus, nisi Christus, caput autem Christi Deus. Nam anima eius intelligens subest verbo Dei Patris seu sapientiae eius, sub quo verbo movetur, sicut apostolus vel missus movetur voluntate mittentis, cuius verba non sunt sua, sed eius, qui misit eum, sicut Christus de se saepius testatus est, quo modo verba sua non sint sua sed eius, qui misit eum, et quod a se ipso non loquatur, sed quod Pater in eo manens faciat opera."

[37] "Si quis non amat Dominum Iesum, sit anathema," *Sermo* 238.13 (*h* XIX: 217): "Et sicut in corpore Christi mystico est conglutinatio membrorum ad spiritum vitae, sic in qualibet anima hominis cuiuscumque vires seu potentiae membra quaedam sunt animae, ut quaelibet anima suo modo caput, oculos, aures etc. habeat spiritualiter

If the head is categorically Christ, then the members are largely undifferentiated and are subordinate to Christ, not to one another. There is only one instance where Cusanus uses the organic metaphor to demarcate the clergy from the laity. In that sermon, he reprises the tripartite imagery of *De concordantia catholica* with one subtle change: the priesthood is still the soul of the church, the faithful remain the body, but now the "word of life"—not the sacraments—is the spirit. The function of the priesthood likewise represents a slight departure from the earlier imagery, now communicating the word to the faithful rather than initiating them into the sacramental mysteries or governing the church.[38] Yet despite this way of framing the composition of the mystical body, he disregards the tripartite image almost entirely one month later in a sermon on the Annunciation. Soul and spirit are synonymous in this context. The church is "like a body having one soul and one spirit," which expands throughout the body and to each of its members.[39] The Spirit of Jesus is the means through which the members are united and the word is the medium through which the Spirit comes:

> So the Spirit of Jesus, who is sent through the word into the soul of the church, unites the many into the unity of the divine life, as the soul unites the many members of the body in the unity of sensible life, and its extension is a unity. Moreover the Spirit of the divine life or eternal wisdom is seized through the word of God one way in Peter, differently in Paul, and so on in the individuals. Nevertheless all are united in him, that all souls might be one

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sicut corpus corporaliter. Et hae vires sunt in unitate animae intellectivae, ut eius medio possint de spiritu vitae intellectivae participare, qui est spiritus Dei sapientiae, scientiae et intellectus, et est spiritus Iesu; sicut in uno exercitu sunt multae vires et potentiae, quae in unitate exercitus consistunt, ut possint subsistere, et per medium exercitus a rectore seu capitaneo salubriter dirigi et moveri, verbum autem capitanei vivificat, movet, regit et ordinat omnia, in quo verbo sunt sapientia, scientia et omnia, quae sunt vivificativa et conservativa totius exercitus et singulorum. Ab eius enim spiritu procedunt imperia et gratiae et stipendia, et sine eo nec est exercitus nec esse potest. Capitaneus autem spiritualis exercitus Christus est, qui est caput ecclesiae, ut ait apostolus."

[38] "Haec est voluntas Dei," *Sermo* 223.14, 1–8 (*h* XIX: 133): "Talis quidem conceptus serviat nobis ad intellectum ecclesiae, quae est corpus Christi mysticum, in qua est spiritus Christi seu voluntas sive amor sanctificans, eius subiectum est anima rationalis, et ilia vivificat corpus. Spiritus Christi vivificat animam et per medium animae corpus. Spiritus verbum vitae est, anima rationalis sacerdotium, corpus fidelis populus."

[39] "Missus est Gabriel," *Sermo* 226.3, 1–11 (*h* XIX: 144): "Est autem ecclesia consideranda quasi unum corpus habens animam unam et spiritum unum. Anima vero consideranda, in qua est spiritus sapientiae, quasi corpus hominis in habitudine ad animam suam. Sicut enim est anima una in homine, quae se expandit per totum corpus et aliter recipitur in qualibet parte corporis, sic spiritus sapientiae se expandit per rationalem animam ecclesiae, quam illuminat, per omnes partes, ut sic dicam, sed aliter et aliter recipitur."

> in him by the Spirit of Christ, as all souls of the disciples of Plato are united in Platonic teachings, that they might all be Platonists, even though one takes the soul of Meno, the other the soul of Crito or other of his disciples.[40]

The one and the same Spirit provides different gifts to the various members of the body. Despite this varied distribution by the Spirit, received in different ways by different members, all are united to one another and to Christ through it. The unity of the Spirit is antecedent to the diversity of gifts.

The note Cusanus strikes in describing the members of the body and the relationship between those members is that of his characteristic unity and diversity motif. There is no discernible tension between those in the upper ranks of the hierarchy and those in the lower, but rather the very same emphasis of harmony amongst unequal members pervading the conciliar *De concordantia catholica* and the papal *De docta ignorantia* alike. One sermon, delivered on the Petrine festival of his titular church in Rome, St. Peter in Chains, retains the differentiation of grades within the ecclesiastical hierarchy, yet roots the various offices in the same Spirit and the same head, Christ. Though the Spirit distributes different gifts to individual members, it nonetheless unites the members to itself and to one another in the very act of distribution. Each member is content with "his own office and place," schism is prevented, and "peace and concord" preserved.[41] Unity and diversity are necessary because each member does not have

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[40] Missus est Gabriel," *Sermo* 226.4, 1–13 (*h* XIX: 148): "Unde spiritus Iesu, qui per verbum mittitur in animam ecclesiae, unit multas in unitatem vitae divinae, sicut anima unit multa membra corporis in unitatem vitae sensibilis, et extensio eius est unio. Aliter autem capitur spiritus vitae divinae seu aeternae sapientiae per verbum Dei in anima Petri, aliter in anima Pauli, et ita de singulis. Quas tamen omnes in se unit, ut sint omnes animae in ipso spiritu Christi una, sicut omnes animae discipulorum Platonis in doctrina platonica uniuntur, ut sint platonicae, licet aliter ipsam capiat anima Menonis, aliter anima Critonis aut alter discipulus eius."

[41] "Si quis non amat Dominum Iesum, sit anathema," *Sermo* 238.12, 1–19 (*h* XIX: 216): "Intelligo igitur corpus Christi mysticum sic se habere scilicet quod unus est spiritus Christi et multi fideles, in quibus est unus spiritus. Licet membra in se sint distincta, in spiritu vero Iesu sunt unita. Et sicut unum corpus distribuit corporalem naturam suam omnibus membris varie et distribuendo unit in se, ita spiritus Iesu distribuit membris fidelibus varias gratias spirituales et distribuendo in se unit. Contentatur autem quodlibet membrum in officio et loco suo, et quodlibet est ad utilitatem omnium, 'ut non sit scisma in corpore.' Sic ecclesia, quae est corpus Christi, institute est in unitate, 'ut non sit scisma in corpore,' sed pax concordia in uno spiritu. Id autem, quod animorum concordiam

sufficient "life or subsistence" on its own and needs "certain men or powers of the Spirit of Jesus" for bringing about "unity in the spirit" and providing the means through which all "might participate in the life of Jesus by the Spirit of life."[42] Though he does not explicitly state so, Cusanus implies here that the priesthood results from this distribution of spiritual gifts in order that all members might be united through the same Spirit.

Corpus Mysticum and Ecclesiastical Hierarchy

Despite the fact that Cusanus treats the members in a generally undifferentiated way and underscores the unity they have despite the diversity of their gifts, this is not to say his use of the organic metaphor excludes a hierarchical ordering of the clergy. On the contrary, there is a decidedly hierarchical character to the mystical body that evinces the important influence of Pseudo-Dionysius. The hierarchy, again, is less monarchical and authoritarian than salvific and mystical. The function of the priesthood in this scheme is illuminative: the priests communicate the word to the body by opening the Scriptures so the faithful might see Christ. Cusanus makes this point when speaking of the clergy as the soul of the church in his 1456 homily on the Cathedra of St. Peter. "The priesthood receives the spirit of life from the word of Jesus, which the word conceals in the letter of the eternal gospel, and makes it alive (*reficit*) and communicates it to the body."[43] The hierarchically ordered priesthood is responsible for mediating the content of Scripture to the faithful.

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efficit et conservat, est caritas. Est igitur spiritus Iesu, in quo fidelis unum sunt, spiritus Dei, qui caritas dicitur."

[42] "Si quis non amat Dominum Iesum, sit anathema," *Sermo* 238.12, 20–32 (*h* XIX: 216): "Unde nota quod sicut in humano corpore sunt varia membra, quae in se non habent vitam nec subsistentiam, sed necesse est ut sint in unitate corporis, et tunc mediante corpore a spiritu vivificante corpus omnia membra vivunt, quod libet in ordine suo, sic in corpore spirituali sunt oculi, aures, os, lingua, venter, pedes etc., spiritualiter quasi quaedam vires seu potentiae spiritus Iesu, quae sunt ordinatae ad unitatem in spiritu unde effluunt omnes vires, et ideo omnes fideles uniuntur, ut mediante ecclesia seu corpore Christi mystico possint de spiritu vitae Iesu vitam participare."

[43] "Haec est voluntas Dei," *Sermo* 223.14, 9–11 (*h* XIX: 133): "Recipit anima a verbo Iesu spiritum vitae, quod verbum latet in littera evangelii aeterni et se reficit et communicat corpori."

To this end, Cusanus adduces a parallel from the medieval university to describe the ranks within the traditional threefold hierarchy of the church. He likens the episcopal hierarchy to the scholastic distinction between teacher (*magister*), bachelor (*baccalarius*), and reader (*lector*). Each rank is graded according to its proficiency in theology and is then deemed a "scholar and teacher" of others devolving from it.[44] At the top of this hierarchy is the papacy, owing to the knowledge of the faith revealed to Peter. The remainder of the hierarchy receives its rank according to devolving competence that in turn forms priests down to the parish level:

> But Peter is the teacher, to whom the Father revealed every mystery of the faith, and thus he himself must confirm the brothers, and he has the chair, to which unity is bound, as Christ said, "Do that which you have heard," and "the one who hears you, hears me." Every bishop holds the chair under his teaching in unity with the chair of Peter like bachelors are formed, and they are called through Peter to be helpers, from whom they have the exercise entrusted to them of gathering or feeding, of binding and loosing. As the assisting presbyters consider themselves in relation to the bishop, so the bishops to the pope. Hence all diocesan presbyters are co-laborers of the sacred things in the parishes, where there is one rector, with whom they labor together.[45]

The function of the clergy follows from their ordering. The bishop exercises his responsibilities of order ("gathering and feeding") and jurisdiction ("binding and loosing") in unity with the pope from whom he received them, as do the parish priests in unity with the bishop. This ecclesiastical hierarchy, nevertheless, has its source in the Spirit who mediates Christ through the word, not in an autonomous papal or monarchial absolutism. Cusanus puts a finer point on this in his 1456 *Quasimodo geniti* sermon, delivered the Sunday after Easter in commentary on the text of

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[44] "Haec est voluntas Dei," *Sermo* 223.14, 6–23 (*h* XIX: 134): "Unde episcopatus unus est quasi intellectualis animae potentia in ecclesia. Sed non est intellectus in supremo gradu nisi in uno, qui aliorum rector et magister est, sicut scientia theologica est in theologis, sed in una schola in uno ut in magistro, in allis ut baccalariis, in allis ut lectoribus. Qui autem proficiunt, scholares et docibiles nominantur."

[45] "Haec est voluntas Dei," *Sermo* 223.15, 1–14 (*h* XIX: 134): "Petrus autem magister est, cui Pater revelavit omne mysterium fidei, et ideo ipse habet confirmare fratres, et tenet cathedram, cui unitas alligata est, quia Christus dicebat: Quae dicunt, faeite, et 'qui vos audit, me audit'. Omnis episcopus in unitate cathedrae Petri sub ipsius magisterio cathedram tenet quasi baccalarii formati, et sunt in adiutorium vocati per Petrum, a quo habent exercitium sibi creditum legendi seu pascendi, ligandi et solvendi. Sic presbyteri curati se habent ad episcopum sicut episcopi ad papam. Unde omnes presbyteri diocesis sunt uti cooperatores divinorum in parochiis, ubi est unus rector, cuius sunt cooperatores."

Christ's post-resurrection commissioning of the apostles. He notes that in this commissioning Christ sent out the apostles as "legates of God.[46] This legateship devolves from the apostles to the pontiffs, then the pontiffs to the bishops in their authority of *ligandi et solvendi*. In so doing, the bishop represents Christ and the Spirit empowering him:

> If therefore Christ speaks in the legate, and the Holy Spirit, who flees lies, moves him, as he either looses or binds, then unless he is not moved by the spirit of truth, the bishop is his instrument or organ, who alone is the binding and loosing judge. Moreover whoever is led away from seeking this sense itself and misuses the divine commission, as much as he presumes to absolve others, then he binds them even more. By this, the church receives all the power of Christ, which through the disciples or legates it exercises binding or losing "in edification of the" mystical "body of Christ."[47]

To the degree that the bishop exercises his authority in conformity with his commissioning and legateship from Christ, he represents Christ and edifies the *corpus mysticum*. Where he fails to, he does more binding than loosing. The pope is a minister in the proper sense of the term.[48]

What makes this requirement of the higher clergy so consequential is their role as mediators of salvation. Through the exercise of jurisdiction, the clergy do not act in caprice, but in service of their power of order, which is the illuminative role within the Dionysian hierarchy. The clergy is mediate the content of the Scriptures to the faithful to the end of their salvation.

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[46] "Haec scripta sunt," *Sermo* 230.18, 5–7 (*h* XIX: 171): "Sunt igitur omnes legati Dei, a quo missi sunt ipsi apostolic, quorum vices tenent episcopi."

[47] "Haec scripta sunt," *Sermo* 230.18, 1–15 (*h* XIX: 171): "Legatio igitur, quae est in pontificibus, quoniam vices Christi agunt, et Spiritus Sanctus, qui est datus ipsis in apostolis, in quorum loca successerunt et succedent, ligat et solvit. Si igitur in legato loquitur Christus et Spiritus Sanctus, qui fugit fictum, movet ipsum, ut solvat vel liget, tunc cum non nisi spiritu veritatis moveatur, est episcopus instrumentum seu organum illius, qui solus est iudex ligans vel solvens. Qui autem suo sensu ducitur se ipsum quaerens et abutens divina commissione, quanto praesumit alios solvere, tanto se ipsum plus stringit. Recipit hic ecclesia omnem Christi potestatem, quam per discipulos seu legatos exercet ligando vel solvendo 'in aedificationem corporis Christi' mystici." It is worth noting that in this context Cusanus interpolates the adjective *mystici* into the Ephesians 4 text of the Vulgate, which only reads *in aedificationem corporis Christi*.

[48] Elsewhere he argues that in the context of the mystical body, the pope is properly speaking a *minister Christi* and not a *dominus ecclesiae*. As members of the mystical body which the pope serves, "any believer is able to call the pope his own, since [the pope] is a minister of the body of Christ, of which the believer is a member (*et quisque fidelis potest dicere papam esse suum, quia minister corporis Christi, cuius fidelis est membrum*)." "Membra vestra templum sunt Spiritus Sancti," *Sermo* 237.7 (*h* XIX: 208).

They open the Scriptures and parse out the word "hidden under the letter that kills" so the members of the mystical body might believe.[49] They make known Christ, who opens the door to eternal life. This in fact is the very purpose of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. In summarizing the role of the priesthood within the mystical body, Cusanus says: "Thus all this has been ordained by God for our sanctification, since this is his will, our sanctification or adoption to the vision of his glory, by which alone does he sanctify visible things, since nothing that is unholy or that is with iniquity is able to enter into that kingdom, where our king sits in his glory."[50] Cusanus highlights the same function of the clergy later, when he compares the preaching of the clergy to the fishermen's nets that Jesus commanded Andrew and Peter throw into the sea. Jesus by his word "made ruddy men to abound with apostolic spirit as evangelistic 'fishermen.'" The preacher does the same for the faithful. He is a "fisher of men," extracting the fish from the world through the "rational discourse" of preaching that they might become "immortal sons of God" and like *christiform* fish cross over into the *corpus mysticum*.[51] The clergy have an illuminative role carried out above all in their preaching task, through which the Spirit mediates

[49] "Haec est voluntas Dei," *Sermo* 223.16 (*h* XIX: 134): "Sic patet ordo ad unum in ecclesia et dignitas sacerdotii, quae est ut anima in respectu ad corpus, et excellentia verbi vitae, quod est ut spiritus vivificans, et quod ecclesia ipsum verbum vitae recipit ex scripturis, quia eloquia sunt ei credita, et verbum vitae dicit, quod illas scrutare debemus, quia de eo sunt. Sunt igitur divinae scripturae, in quibus spiritus vitae sub littera mortificante latitat, ut paradisus malorum Punicorum et ager dominicus atque vinea Engadi et 'vitis vera' et 'puteus aquarum viventium, quae fluunt de Libano' et stellae eaeli et herbae atque arbores ac fruges terrae et viva animalia et omnia, in quibus ex sensibili motu pertingimus ad invisibilem vitam. Et pastor per ostium seu viam, quae Christus est, ducit ad refectionem animas et intrando et exeundo ilia prata pascua inveniuntur. Dum enim intrat mundum sequendo Christum per activam vitam aut exit sequendo Christum mundum deserentem per contemplationem, pascua inveniet."

[50] "Haec est voluntas Dei," *Sermo* 223.17, 1–7 (*h* XIX: 135): "Haec omnia sic a Deo ordinata sunt pro nostra sanctificatione, quia haec est voluntas eius, sanctificatio sive adoptatio nostra ad visionem gloriae suae, quae solum sanctis est visibilis, cum nihil non sanctum seu coinquinatum in regnum iliud, ubi sedet rex noster in gloria sua, intrare queat."

[51] "Venite, post me," *Sermo* 253.17, 5–12 (*h* XIX: 340): "Non enim est praedicator evangelicus nisi 'piscator hominum', qui de turbatione mundi mediante rationali discursu separat piscem ab aqua, ut decoctus fiat cibus transiens in filium Dei immortalem. Christi formis est enim cibus Iesu transiens in corpus eius mysticum, ut vivificetur spiritu eius, vita scilicet indeficienti et aeterna."

Christ to the faithful, making them children of God and conforming them to Christ. Through the downward mediation of the content of the Scriptures, the ecclesiastical hierarchy effects the upward perfection of the members of the *corpus mysticum* until they achieve final union with the head of the body, Christ.

This illuminative function of the clergy also raises the question of the pope's edifying role in the church (*aedificatio ecclesiae*) and the fairly muted place of the papacy within the sermons. Throughout the sermons, the papacy functions less as a monarchical force in church governance than as a witness to Christ, since it was Peter to whom the confession of Christ was first revealed and his successors are responsible for communicating that confession.[52] This also helps contextualize the one instance where Cusanus describes Peter as head of the church. In his last sermon before secluding himself in Castle Andraz due to the suspected attempt on his life by Duke Sigismund, he preaches at the parochial church of Innsbruck on the festival day of Peter and Paul. The short address contrasts natural human *agnitio* with *cognitio* as that which one knows through revelation, not nature or sensible things.[53] What Peter confessed was a *cognitio* revealed by the Father and therefore whoever believes this confession in fact believes what God revealed to Peter.[54] The church is founded on that confession, and as the body of Christ the church also has the power of binding and loosing implicit in that confession. Peter exercises this, but only in accordance with the word given him. The papacy in this sense is responsible not for ruling the church according to secular monarchical or hierocratic principles, but rather according to the confession of Christ revealed to Peter and it is through this revelation that Peter edifies and

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[52] Izbicki, "Ambivalent Papalism," 49–65, and Weier, "Der Glaube des Petrus," 267–79.

[53] "Beatus es, Simon Bar Iona," *Sermo* 287.1–2 (*h* XIX: 641–2). For an English translation of this sermon (with parallel Latin), see Izbicki, *Writings on Church and Reform*, 482–87.

[54] "Beatus es, Simon Bar Iona," *Sermo* 287.3 (*h* XIX: 642).

governs the church. The faithful grasp Christ "mystically" (*mystice*) in the church by affirming the confession the Father revealed to Peter about Christ. Furthermore, the goal of exercising this headship in the church is to "edify the church not yet edified": the pope must ensure the ongoing *cognitio* of the word revealed to Peter by the Father because it is by this faith in the confession of Christ alone that one becomes blessed and attains salvation.[55] Like the rest of the clergy, the pope himself has an illuminative role through which he rules and governs the church according to the confession of Peter.

Corpus Mysticum, Church Triumphant, and Beatific Vision

Another pertinent theme in connection with the *corpus mysticum* as a mystical hierarchy is its relation to the church triumphant (*ecclesia triumphans*). In *De concordantia catholica*, Cusanus had followed medieval tradition by asserting a tripartite church: the church militant (*militans*) on earth, the church sleeping (*dormiens*) in purgatory, and the church triumphant (*triumphans*) in the heavens.[56] He resumed these same basic themes in an early Brixen sermon, preached on All Souls in 1453, where he argued that through its prayers the church *militans* and the church *triumphans* aid the church *dormiens* that is still *in via* in its pursuit of obtaining Christ and entering the church triumphant with the martyrs.[57] Later in the Brixen period, he had begun taking the church triumphant in more mystical terms and placing it within an ascending hierarchy that reaches fruition only at the beatific vision. Using Pseudo-Dionysius's notion of negative

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[55] "Beatus es, Simon Bar Iona," *Sermo* 287.4, 23–34 (*h* XIX: 643): "Dico verbum Christi, prout capitur Christus pro vere et mystice; nam prout capitur mystice, scilicet pro ecclesia, quae est corpus Christi mysticum, in hoc corpore Petrus caput exsistens habet omnem corporis potestatem, quia rector qui regit per revelationem verbi Dei. Habet etiam Petrus omnem Christi potestatem, ut aedificare possit ecclesiam nondum aedificatam. Sicut Christus dixit: 'Super hanc petram aedificabo ecclesiam', sic Petrus aedificat in verbo Christi et ecclesiam gubernat."

[56] *DCC* I.19 (*h* XIV: 42); Sigmund, 14.

[57] "Qui credit me," *Sermo* 136.2–4 (*h* XVIII: 80–81).

theology as a dialectical means toward theosis, Cusanus sets the *corpus mysticum* in the context of mystical ascent toward the church triumphant.

His 1456 Christmas Day sermon is a compendious presentation of mystical theology in which he comes to identify the *corpus mysticum* with the church triumphant. The sermon itself sets out the framework for mystical ascent toward the vision of God. After an extended discussion of the rational soul's ability to name God and the need for a negative theology to move past natural reason through the addition of revelation and grace, he argues that perfect knowledge of God must await the beatific vision, which is attainable in part through mystical contemplation, though fully only when one is translated to the church triumphant.[58] He then describes a fourfold mystical theology through which one ascends from the natural knowledge of God to the final eschatological vision, or "quiddity of quiddities." The first grade of knowledge is the natural, out of which the rational desire to name God arises. The second grade is the mystical, where revelation enables the mystic to move past the natural conceptions of God and negate the positive affirmations made about him by natural knowledge.[59] The third is the temporal vision of God, received through illumination of darkness and ignorance, but nevertheless "enigmatic and not clear."[60] The final stage is "without darkness or enigma" and represents "the cognition of God as he is" or the "quiddity of God" or the "quiddity of the

[58] Beierwaltes has described this as a dialectic between the *endlich* and the *unendlich* vision of God; one is temporal and attainable through mystical vision, the other permanent and only accessible in the beatific vision. See Walter Beierwaltes, "'Visio facialis' — Sehen ins Angesicht: Zur Coincidenz des endlichen und unendlichen Blicks bei Cusanus," *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 18 (1989): 92–124.

[59] "Multifarie multisque modis," *Sermo* 258.12, 1–6 (*h* XIX: 383): "Sunt igitur quattuor gradus cognitionis Dei: scilicet naturalis, quam ex desideriis spiritus rationalis elicimus; mysticus, qui modus est in lumine altiori, ubi revelatur animae Deum supra id omne esse, quod nomina desideriorum spiritus exprimunt."

[60] "Multifarie multisque modis," *Sermo* 258.13, 1–4, 11–14 (*h* XIX: 383): "Deinde tertius gradus est ostensionis faciei ipsius, quae facies mansit in caligine in secundo modo, et est lumen illuminans caliginem, ad quam ducit secunda via...Et illuminatio est aenigmatica et non clara, quae non ostendit discrete cognitioni faciem claram, sed obumbratam; et crescit fides atque decrescit uti luna."

infinite" or the "quiddity of the highest essence."[61] While quiddity is impossible to attain this side of the beatific vision, it is necessary for eternal felicity. Thus, through these grades of knowledge one ascends to the final, eschatological vision, even if complete knowledge is not possible apart from the beatific vision.

In this context Cusanus makes the unexpected claim that the mystical body is itself identical with the church triumphant. To this point in the Brixen period, and even going back to his earliest treatments of the topic in *De concordantia catholica*, the mystical body was always related to the church militant. The increasingly mystical direction of his ecclesiology, however, makes this subtle change possible. The sermon itself speaks of "all the good who are of God" being possessed by Christ as members of his body. Christ went ahead of the members in doing good, and so from those who follow him he "creates and increases his mystical body, such that he gathers into himself whoever is good in the universe." The definition of "good" here is mystical—the good are those have born the fruit of wisdom out of the seed planted in the rational soul.[62] Those who attain such wisdom through mystical ascent then enter "into the mystical body of Christ or the church triumphant (*intrando in corpus Christi mysticum seu ecclesiam triumphantem*)." On account of their dutiful attainment of wisdom, they are judged as "good," enter the kingdom of heaven, and join the mystical body of the church triumphant.[63] The final

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[61] "Multifarie multisque modis," *Sermo* 258.14, 1–11 (*h* XIX: 384): "Sed in stabili seu caelesti regione illuminat lux solis iustitiae per se, uti Iohannes in Apocalypsi vidit, et ostendit faciem Dei vere uti est: sine umbra et aenigmate; et est cognitio Dei, uti Deus est. Est adhuc ultima cognitio, quae est quiditas Dei. Et quia quiditas Dei est excedens omnem mensuram cognitionis illius, quae non est ipsa quiditas, ideo cum in solo Deo quiditas eius sit et cognitio eius, tunc cum quiditas Dei infiniti non sit communicabilis seu multiplicabilis sic nec cognitio quae est quiditas eius."

[62] The use of the *semen* of the rational soul as a point of contact between mystical theology and reform has its roots in Jean Gerson. See Ozment, "Patterns of Reform," 116–20, and Pascoe, *Jean Gerson*, 39–48.

[63] "Multifarie multisque modis," *Sermo* 258.21, 1–26 (*h* XIX: 387): "Et ultimo ipse est heres universorum bonorum in futuro orbe, prout Paulus infra exponit nam omnes boni qui Dei sunt, ab eo possidentur, sicut membra corporis possidentur a spiritu, qui ei dominatur. Succedit Christus in omnibus bonis, nam ex successione corpus eius mysticum crescit et augetur, ita quod ipse in se colligit quidquid boni est in universo. Omnis enim natura rationalis particeps sapientiae est hereditas sapientiae, nam servit ei et fructificare potest fructus bonos sapientiae. Omnis igitur

judgment, when Christ transfers the church militant into the church triumphant as his mystical body, is predicated upon whether or not one has sewn the seed of wisdom in the rational soul and as a consequence has followed Christ. Furthermore, it is only at the judgment that the church militant enters the church triumphant and as mystical body attains to the vision of God in his essence as quiddity of quiddities.

This fairly idiosyncratic identification of the mystical body with the church triumphant is not repeated in the Brixen corpus, but Cusanus does pick up some of the same themes elsewhere in supporting his view that the mystical body is in fact the means of attaining mystical union and entering the church triumphant. During Lent of 1457, he preaches about the mystical body as a seed of the promise given to Abraham. Through this guarantee or formal promise (*repromissio*), all its heirs become sons of the promise by faith and are able to attain the beatific vision (*qui ad videndum perveniunt*).[64] He then equates the inheritance of this seed with the mystical body: "Therefore the mystical body of Christ is the promise, even the seed, in which all tribes of the earth are blessed." While some share in that promise according to the flesh, only those who share in it "from above" are able to attain the vision of God, either through the "present enigmatic vision" or the "future vision face to face."[65] Elsewhere, he correlates the church triumphant with

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spiritus rationalis, qui est ut ager in quo est semen sapientiae, est sub ipsa sapientia, quia semen est sapientiae quae agrum seminavit, et fructus bonus est sapientiae, quia est fructus seminis. Ideo iure suo colligit sapientia in se fructum seminis sui. Et ita venientes venient cum exsultatione portantes manipulos suos intrando in corpus Christi mysticum seu ecclesiam triumphantem. Et hoc Christus docet, quando aperit regnum caelorum simile sagenae missae in mari, quae multos pisces complectitur, et boni ex eis colliguntur et cetera. Collectio bonorum in unum significant quod pisces illi boni et sapidi quasi cibus sapidus transeunt in unitatem corporis ecclesiae, quae ex collectione constituitur, quae est corpus Christi."

[64] "Non sumus ancillae filii," *Sermo* 275.16 (*h* XIX: 538).

[65] "Non sumus ancillae filii," *Sermo* 275.17, 1–14 (*h* XIX: 538–39): "Corpus igitur Christi mysticum est repromissio, scilicet semen, in quo benedicentur omnes tribus terrae. Sic patet quod solum Christiani sunt filii Abrahae secundum repromissionem, quibus convenit verum nomen Israel et Ierusalem quae de sursum est, scilicet visionis Dei et pacis. Alii omnes filii dicuntur filii Abrahae seu patris multarum gentium secundum carnem, qui ad ea quae spiritus Dei sunt, non perveniunt. Nota Apostolum qui dicit, quod 'Ierusalem, quae de sursum est, est mater nostra,' scilicet Christianorum. Et est mater illa fides in praesenti aenigmatica visio et in futuro facialis visio, et est de sursum fides, quia est gratia Dei."

the kingdom of heaven and distinguishes it from the church militant. While he does not use mystical body language, he suggests the same basic conclusion as above. The "elect" within the church militant are "predestined to the reign of life and constitute the church militant, which is transferred to the triumphant." Such members are "true sons here in faith and hope," but in the church triumphant they are sons "in truth."[66] The wicked within the church militant are opposed to its edification, but the good pursue it so they might attain the kingdom of heaven and the facial vision accompanying it. The church militant moves toward the church triumphant in order to reach it through the beatific vision, where true facial knowledge of God alone exists.

Corpus Mysticum and *Corpus Permixtum*

A related component in Cusanus's use of the mystical body as metaphor for the church is his adaptation of *corpus permixtum* images, so prominent since Augustine.[67] Going back as far as *De concordantia catholica*, his preferred image was the *ecclesia malignantium*, or "church of the wicked."[68] This appears at several places in the Brixen sermons. A 1454 St. Peter in Chains sermon at the Brixen cathedral gave him the opportunity to parse the *ecclesia malignantium* hierarchically. Whereas Peter as *princeps ecclesiae* and his apostolic successors only speak to the church that which the Father revealed to Peter himself, there are others in the church who speak

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[66] "Simile est regnum caelorum," *Sermo* 267.14, 1–22 (*h* XIX: 460): "Adhuc diceres: Nonne sanctus Gregorius in homilia et alii doctores exponunt regnum caelorum etiam hanc militantem ecclesiam significare propter textum nostrum in fine, ubi eiciuntur plerique? Dico: non sunt de regno caelorum nisi 'electi', ideo salvator semper figurat regnum caelorum in quadam electione, ut hic et de sagena et de virginibus et cetera. Illi 'electi' sunt proprie 'filii regni' et praedestinati ad regnum vitae et constituunt ecclesiam illam militantem, quae transfertur in triumphantem. Unde qui vere sunt filii hic in fide et spe, ibi in veritate, numquam eicientur extra regnum, sed quia ad aedificationem ipsorum expedit malos esse permixtim cum bonis, mali enim conferunt aedificationi et eis obesse non possunt, ideo ecclesia in hoc mundo includit bonos et malos, licet 'filii regni,' qui in fine cognoscentur, solum se fecisse regnum caelorum ostendant. Unde proprie non capitur regnum caelorum pro ecclesia, sed pro exsistentibus in ecclesia, et sunt praedestinati ad vitam."

[67] On the relationship between the Augustinian *corpus* metaphors and his views of church and reform, see Ladner, *Idea of Reform*, 266–83.

[68] This language appears eight times in *DCC* and is drawn from Psalm 25:5 in the Vulgate: "odivi ecclesiam malignantium et cum impiis non sedebo."

on their own and cause division. They "are not from the church of Christ, but from the church of wicked spirits, also called the *ecclesia malignantium*."[69] The image of the *ecclesia malignantium* comes together later with his images of both the *corpus permixtum* and *christiformitas* to present a church divided less horizontally than vertically. In this tack, those of the *ecclesia malignantium* are within the church and, even though they are known as Christians, their inclinations belie it. The wicked "bear the name of Christ" and "imagine themselves humble and *christiform*," but are idolators who "fulfill themselves by means of carnal desires," whereas the others "put on the likeness of virtue," that is, "the virtue of Christ" and their desires conform to him.[70] The *ecclesia malignantium* image splits the church into two—one contingent seeking salvation through Christ and serving the unity of the church, the other fulfilling its own desires and dividing the church.

Cusanus will later use *ecclesia malignantium* in conjunction with *corpus mysticum*. His 1455 Advent II sermon is an extended comment on the creedal language regarding the final judgment. This leads him to distinguish the body of the antichrist from the body of Christ:

> But who are those who are called the world? I respond: Those who are born in this sensible world and have not heard the calling of the word of God, which calls them from the world, but prefer the world and its desires to the truth, which called them to true life. So this which is called the body of sin by Paul, I call the world situated in wickedness. It can also be called *ecclesia malignantium* since the spirit of the wicked, which is a spirit of error, reigns in it, as does the spirit of truth in the body redeemed from sin, the body which is called the body of Christ. Moreover the church of the wicked can be called the body of the antichrist, though the antichrist himself may be the most wicked of all wicked men. For this Christ

[69] "Tu est Petrus," *Sermo* 162.5, 18–26 (*h* XVIII: 191): "Unde omne verbum in ecclesia non est nisi verbum Dei. Et qui non loquitur verba Dei, sed sua, non est in ecclesia Dei, in qua solum est verbum Dei et spiritus vivificans intelligentiam, sed scissus et haereticus seu divisus. Satan 'divisor' est 'pater mendacii,' Christus veritas. Unde illi non sunt de ecclesia Christi, sed ecclesia maligni spiritus et vocatur 'ecclesia malignantium.' Et Paulus dicit tales esse 'verbum Dei adulterantes'."

[70] "Domine, adiuva me," *Sermo* 272.15, 4–20 (*h* XIX: 504): "Apparent enim novem ordines in hac ecclesia malignantium, sicut sunt novem ordines in ecclesia Deo vere militantium. Sunt enim nomine Christiani gestantes imaginem Christi terream scilicet carneam et voluptuosam, 'quorum deus venter est', et licet nominentur Christiani, sunt tamen idolatrae; nam in quantum Christus servit ventri, in tantum ipsum amant. Venter igitur illorum, ut ait Apostolus, est Deus et 'Christus mediator', uti sunt illi qui fingunt se humiles et christiformes, ut hoc medio carnalia desideria adimpleant, uti 'mulier benefaciens,' de qua Salomon dicit: 'Melior est iniquitas viti quam mulier benefaciens'; nam scit quod virtus amatur: ipsa induit similitudinem virtutis, quae virtus Christus est, ut ametur et delicietur in voluptatibus."

> comes in majesty against the antichrist, that he might be justly condemned with eternal death by the judge who has overcome. Thus the Day of Judgment does not come, in which the Son of God judges the son of perdition, unless first the antichrist himself will have completed his wicked course.[71]

The body of the antichrist or *ecclesia malignantium* is from the world and opposed to the truth, whereas the body of Christ was called out of the world and desires the truth. Furthermore, it is the body of the antichrist that persecutes the church and completes "the crosses and passions and also the torments which are lacking in the body of Christ."[72] He also applies the persecution image of the antichrist in describing the traditional Augustinian *corpus diaboli* persecuting the church. The devil is the enemy of the seed and persecutes Christ in his members: "Behold that devil is the enemy of our salvation and is known to impede salvation with all zeal, nor does he preserve the goal of the Savior. And since Satan is chiefly opposed to the word of God, then he attacks Christ in the members of Christ."[73]

This distinction between two bodies or churches also furnishes an important clue to how Cusanus views excommunication. One 1456 sermon steeped in mystical body language, delivered on the annual dedication of the Brixen cathedral, employs the language of mystical theology to divide the church into two types of believers: the "carnal" and the "spiritual." He

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[71] "Iterum venturus est iudicare," *Sermo* 210.9, 1–22 (*h* XIX: 34): "Sed qui sunt illi, qui dicuntur mundus? Respondeo: Qui nati in hoc sensibili mundo et vocationem verbi Dei, quod eos de mundo vocavit, non audiverunt, sed mundum et eius concupiscentias praetulerunt veritati, quae eos ad veram vitam vocavit. Unde hoc, quod dicitur corpus peccati per Paulum, dico mundum in maligno positum. Et potest dici 'ecclesia malignantium,' quia spiritus maligni, qui est spiritus erroris, in eo regnat, sicut spiritus veritatis in corpore, redempto a peccatis, quod corpus dicitur corpus Christi. Etiam dici potest corpus antichristi ecclesia malignantium, cum ipse antichristus omnium malorum hominum fiat pessimus. Ob hoc Christus veniet in maiestate contra antichristum, ut iusto iudicio victus aeterna morte condemnetur. Unde non veniet dies iudicii, in quo Filius Dei iudicet filium perditionis, nisi prius antichristus ipse compleverit cursum suum malum."

[72] "Iterum venturus est iudicare," *Sermo* 210.11, 14–19 (*h* XIX: 34): "Unde cruciatus et passiones atque tormenta, quae desunt corpori Christi, exspectantur tunc adimpleri, ut sit completa iniquitas persecutoris antichristi et non restet possibilis passio per quemcumque malum excogitanda, quae corpori Christi nonsit inflicta."

[73] "Simile est regnum caelorum," *Sermo* 267.20, 7–12 (*h* XIX: 463): "Ecce quod diabolus est inimicus salvatoris nostri et conatur omni studio impedire salvationem, ne scilicet habeat intentum salvator. Et quia principaliter Satan verbo Dei adversatur, tunc Christum persequitur in membris Christi."

paraphrases the introductory verses of Pseudo-Dionysius's treatise on mystical theology to define the "perfect believers" as those who elevate their minds beyond sensible things to "the wisdom hidden in the mystery before all ages."[74] Paul himself had followed this definition in distinguishing between the carnal and the spiritual: The perfect are the "church of the faithful" among whom the Spirit dwells; the carnal are "schismatics" who violate the temple where the Spirit dwells.[75] On the basis of this "rule," Cusanus can justify excommunication. The carnal, like the unbeliever, is removed from the body of the faithful in order both to save the transgressor through repentance and to protect the church as a body from the sin of the transgressor.[76] He applies this rule again later, but this time with more explicit reference to the *corpus mysticum*. In his Judica 1457 sermon, he claims that such ills as blasphemy, disobedience, failure to keep the Sabbath, and adultery disturb peace and order in the church. Those who do so without penance are subject to being cut off from the church through excommunication:

> Are not all such who have tossed away Christ, and inasmuch as they are eager to deprive the Christian republic and the mystical body of Christ its life, which is Christ, are they not "from their father the devil," therefore should the impure and besieging not be ejected from beyond the camp of the church and placed beyond the communion like lepers, lest they

[74] "Membra vestra templum sunt Spiritus Sancti," *Sermo* 237.6, 1–16 (*h* XIX: 207): "Quinto eliciamus quod inter perfectos fideles loqui possumus de sapientia in mysterio abscondita ante saecula, quam nemo principum huius mundi novit, ut quando reddimus rationem fidei et abscondita mysteria in signis sacramentalibus enodamus, et Iesum sapientiam Patris in scripturis absconditum revelamus et mysticam theologiam explanamus, quae ab imperfectis abscondimus, prout et Dionysius Areopagita, qui mysticam theologiam a Paulo habuit, Timotheo scribens abscondi iubet, et Christus ad perfectos apostolos dicit: 'Vobis datum est nosse etc., ceteris autem in parabolis.' Ita Paulus hic in tertio capitulo dicit quod Corinthis imperfectis non potuit nisi ut carnalibus loqui."

[75] "Membra vestra templum sunt Spiritus Sancti," *Sermo* 237.6, 17–27 (*h* XIX: 208): "Ponit autem regulam, ut cognoscamus qui carnales et qui spirituales et perfecti; et dicit quod carnales ambulant secundum hominem, quia ea faciunt quae communiter homines faciunt huius mundi, puta rixantur, contendunt, se dividunt, scisma faciunt et huiusmodi. Scismatici autem quia violant templum Domini sanctum, in quo est spiritus Dei, ideo ut violatores disperdentur a Deo. Ecclesia fidelium est templum Dei sanctum, in quo est spiritus Dei, qui habitat in eo."

[76] "Membra vestra templum sunt Spiritus Sancti," *Sermo* 237.9, 11–20 (*h* XIX: 209): "Iubet autem expurgare vetus fermentum etc., quia modicum fermenti corrumpit massam. Fuit i n concilio apostolorum statutum, quod a forn icatione et immolatis idolis esset abstinendum. Declarat, quod fornicatores et alii peccatores, scilicet avari, rapaces, idolis servientes, maledici, ebriosi et adulteri si sunt de fratribus seu fidelibus, debent extra communionem poni, et cum ipsis non debemus cibum sumere. Si non est fidelis, Dei iudicio est dimittendus."

infect them? For unless they are ejected from the temple, Christ will secretly leave the temple.[77]

The mystical body defiles itself by consort with those who threaten its purity. This flows logically from Cusanus's basic distinction between the two populations mixed in the church. It also makes more understandable why he would so freely avail himself of excommunication, as well as imperial interdict.[78] For Cusanus, the church as mystical body was a salvific entity and the presence of those opposed to that church threatened not only their salvation, but others among whom they are mixed. Excommunication for Cusanus was itself not episcopal demagoguery, or even a Gregorian exercise of *libertas ecclesiae*, but rather a consequence of his ecclesiological demarcation of two bodies or two populations within the one church and the need to protect the pure, mystical, and perfect from the diabolical, antichristian, carnal, and schismatic. The latter must be removed in order to safeguard the salvation of the former.

By way of summary, the mystical body is at once a horizontal and a vertical entity, but it is neither egalitarian nor monarchical. Cusanus avails himself freely of Dionysian imagery to present the *corpus mysticum* as a mystical hierarchy through which members ascend toward union with Christ, the head. The accent is on the *mysticum*, not the *corpus*. The papacy is not the head of the body, but Christ, even though the papacy takes its place within this mystical hierarchy. The function of the ecclesiastical hierarchy is illuminative, as also in Pseudo-Dionysius. The hierarchs communicate the word from the Scriptures by revealing Christ hidden under the letter of the biblical texts. The purpose of this illuminative function is the ascent of the

[77] "Qui per Spiritum Sanctum semet ipsum obtulit," *Sermo* 276.50, 1–9 (*fi* XIX: 555): "Nonne omnes tales qui Christum eiciunt, et quantum in ipsis est, rem publicam christianam et corpus Christi mysticum privare student vita sua quae Christus est, sunt 'ex patre diabolo,' ideo ut immundi et obsessi extra castra ecclesia eiciendi et extra communionem ponendi tam quam leprosi, ne inficiant? Nisi enim ipsi eicantur de templo, Christus absconsus exit de temple."

[78] On excommunication in Cusanus, see Pavlac, "Curse of Cusanus," 199–213.

mystical body's members toward the beatific vision and transference from the church militant to the church triumphant. The ecclesiastical hierarchy is indeed a descending movement in the sense that the clergy communicate the content of the Scriptures as it was revealed first to Peter, then to the apostles. Nonetheless, this descending movement occurs so that the members of the body might themselves ascend upward toward the knowledge of Christ, mystical union with him, and ultimately the beatific vision of him in the church triumphant. In this framework, the ecclesiastical hierarchy escapes the authoritarian bent some find in Cusanus's later papalist ecclesiology.

Christiformitas as Image of Personal Reform

The other central image for reform that Cusanus employs in the Brixen sermons is that of *christiformitas*, or Christ-likeness. He had used the term in numerous early writings, including *De concordantia catholica* and *De docta ignorantia*, but it is in the context of the Brixen episcopate that it becomes paradigmatic for his personal reform efforts.[79] In certain respects *christiformitas* provides a complementary dimension to *corpus mysticum*. Whereas the mystical body represents a communal and horizontal image of church reform, *christiformitas* symbolizes its individual and vertical image. In the same way that the *corpus mysticum* image came to describe a Dionysian mystical hierarchy, *christiformitas* brings to light the participatory dimension of the individual in the mystical ascent toward union with Christ. Through the imitation of Christ, the individual seeks the end of perfection. At the outset, a single representative citation will suffice to define *christiformitas*:

> Therefore if he gave all his power to a son, then the glory and majesty of the father or king would be comprehended in the power of the son. Moreover, the son indeed has this power, that what he received he is also able to communicate, indeed sonship (*filiationem*). For

[79] For literature on *christiformitas* in the sermons, see chapter one, n. 79.

> sonship is power and heredity...this reception, indeed that which the Son has received, is the same as that which Paul promised in Ephesians 3, indeed through the indwelling of the Spirit of God in the interior man who corroborates the power of our soul, that by him Christ dwells in our interior man through faith. Then "rooted and established in love" we may be able "to comprehend with all the saints what is the length," etc. So having put on Christ through a formed faith and imitating conformity he arrives at comprehension, since this is the form which sanctifies, indeed the form of Christ. Thus the *christiform* are all the saints who comprehend.[80]

Christiformitas describes the moral conformity to Christ as exemplar through which faith is formed by imitating Christ and filiation or theosis is attained. The discussion of *christiformitas* as an image for personal reform will follow these general lines, with additional reference to its applicability to the corporate, ecclesiastical context.[81]

Christ as Exemplar

The basis for the *christiformitas* metaphor in Cusanus's sermons is the contrast between Adam and Christ as images roughly paralleling nature and grace. Some of the terms he uses in this connection take a Platonic character in describing sin as a desecration of the original created form. One is *deformitas*, which often takes on medical or biological connotations.[82] It can also refer to the aesthetic deformity of nature as a result of sin, as he does in one sermon based on

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[80] "Sic currite, ut comprehendatis," *Sermo* 268.12, 1–20 (*h* XIX: 470): "Esto igitur, quod filio dedit omnem suam potestatem, tune in potestate filii comprehendo gloriam et maiestatem patris seu regis. Hanc autem potestatem sic habet filius, quod recipienti ipsum potest eandem communicare, scillcet filiationem. Filiatio enim est potestas et hereditatio. De hoc alibi saepius. Sed haec receptio, scillcet quod Fillus recipiatur, est quemadmodum Paulus ibidem ad Ephesios 3 praemittit, scillcet per inhabitationem Spiritus Dei in interiore homine qui virtutem nostri spiritus corroboret, ut in ipso nostro interiore homine habitet Christus per fidem. Tunc 'in caritate radicati et fundati' poterimus 'comprehendere cum omnibus sanctis, quae sit longitudo' et cetera. Sic per fidem formatam et conformitatem imitativam Christum induendo ad comprehensionem devenitur, quia haec est forma sanctificans, sdlicet forma Christi. Unde christiformes sunt omnes sancti comprehendentes." The verb *comprehendere* here has a double meaning for Cusanus, denoting both understanding and obtaining.

[81] The contours of *christiformitas* follow the notion of personal reform laid out in the literature associated with Gerhart Ladner and the study of reform ideas. This way of framing reform suggests certain definitive categories for the traditional "Christian idea of reform," including the restoration of the image and likeness of God in man, Christ as exemplar and basis for imitation, and the applicability of those images beyond the individual to the church. For his more programmatic discussion, see Ladner, *Idea of Reform*, 1–35.

[82] Cf. "Caelum et terra transibunt," *Sermo* 165.4 (*h* XVIII: 204); "Volo mundare," *Sermo* 264.8 (*h* XIX: 430); "Qui per Spiritum Sanctum semet ipsum obtulit," *Sermo* 276.13 (*h* XIX: 546).

Pseudo-Dionysius's *De divinis nominibus*.[83] Another related image is that of *differmitas*. In one instance, *christiformitas* implies a change of life at the risk of eternal judgment, where one is either raised to life in accordance with conformity to Christ or to judgment in accordance with deformity.[84] Similarly, he can speak of *differmitas* as conformity to the devil: "For those who conform to him are called the sons of God, since he is the Son, and those who are deformed (*differmitas*) from him are united to the deformity (*differmem*) of Satan, who is the head and prince of them, and are his angels or ministers, as the Gospel declares."[85] Both of these terms proliferate throughout his published writings, especially *De concordantia catholica*, in addition to the sermons. An alternative more peculiar to the later Brixen sermons, however, is the notion of humanity's *Adeitas*, or Adamness. On the 1457 festival of Jesus' circumcision, Cusanus develops the Adam-Christ motif using this image. As Adam is a counterpoint to Christ, so too is *Adeitas* a counterpoint to *christiformitas*. It is equivalent with the theological concept of nature. All humans are propagated from the first man, Adam, and all humanity is enfolded in him.[86] The first sins in the Garden of Eden cut Adam and his descendants off from spiritual life, but not from the use of reason. The rational soul is the image or seed that survived the first sin and which

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[83] "Tota pulchra es, amica mea, et macula non est in te," *Sermo* 243.25, 1–9 (*h* XIX: 261): "Virtutes caelorum quid sunt nisi pulchritudines in regno Dei? Virtus intantum magna inquantum pulchra. Foeda non sunt de regno pulchritudinis. Deformitates animarum non sunt nisi foeditates suam pulchritudinem deformantes, quae non sunt ex pulchritudine, quoniam ex prima pulchritudine non nisi pulchra et bona emanare possunt. Deformitas ex recipientibus, decor a datore formae."

[84] "Ubi venit plenitude temporis, misit Deus Filium suum," *Sermo* 169.15, 15–18 (*h* XVIII: 230): "Nam ipse est solus via ad regnum et vir, in quo fiet iudicium resurrectionis ad vitam per conformitatem et iudicii per difformitatem."

[85] "Ibunt hi in supplicium aeteroum, iusti autem in vitam aeternam," *Sermo* 175.3, 13–16 (*h* XVIII: 274): "Nam conformes ei filii Dei vocabuntur, quia ipse Filius, et difformes ei ad difformem Satan sociabuntur qui erit eorum caput et princeps, et cuius, ipsi angeli seu ministri, ut evangelium declarat."

[86] "Loquere et exhortare," *Sermo* 260.8, 16–22 (*h* XIX: 399): "Ita Adam vivit in omnibus posteris et renovatur in omni generatione. Unde humanitas, quae idem est quod Adeitas—nam adama terra, sic et humus terra dicitur—, una est in omnibus, quae in omnibus ab uno est. In omnibus igitur posteris Adae non est humanitas antiquata, sed renovata semper."

unfolds in all Adam's descendants, but it is perfected in the maximal union of humanity and divinity in Christ.[87] *Adeitas* parallels Christ's humanity as nature created in the image of God with a rational soul, but it is not capable of attaining filiation as God's son on its own. It requires the "grace of filiation" present in the "exemplar," that is, Christ.[88] That grace represents the blessing promised to Abraham and coming through his seed, Jesus, who is the union of *Adeitas* and God.

Christ, then, is the counterpoint to *Adeitas* and the exemplar according to which all created humanity should conform if it has the hope of filiation. Another contrast of Adam with Christ highlights this. In a 1455 Advent sermon at Brixen, Cusanus uses the motif from Romans 13:14 ("Put on the Lord Jesus Christ") to describe the two Adams in intellective terms. The first Adam was created with a rational soul ordering the body, where the virtues of the body reflect the operation of the rational soul. This rational soul, or intellect, is the *imago Dei* and understanding is likeness to that image.[89] He contrasts the sons of Adam according to propagation through the flesh with the sons of God according to filiation through Christ. Though all humanity conforms to Adam according to nature, the sons of God conform to Christ "through the spirit of faith from God."[90] Christ, as the union of Adam and God, is the exemplar for conformity: "Moreover Christ

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[87] "Loquere et exhortare," *Sermo* 260.12, 1–3 (*h* XIX: 400): "Veritas autem incorruptibilis est, et sic humanitas sive Adeitas unita est in Iesu immortalitati seu Filio Dei."

[88] "Loquere et exhortare," *Sermo* 260.13, 1–18 (*h* XIX: 401): "Est deinde considerandum quod est alia benedictio, quae rationalem hominis spiritum attingit. Quae benedictio est gratia, per quam spiritus hominis, qui est imago sapientiae, iungitur exemplari, scilicet sapientiae aetemae, per quam spiritus felicitatur et per eius felicitationem totus homo; et vocatur benedictio fidelium, quorum pater nominatur Abraham. Sic in Christo intellectus est sapientiae aeternae unitus, ita quod eius humanitas per hoc est gratiam filiationis Dei assecuta, per quam in melius mutata est et plenitudinem gratiae et benedictionis assecuta, quae sufficit omnibus. Et sic Christus est, in quo benedictiones omnes vitae animalis ex Adam aut rationalis ex Abraham complicantur; neque in alio aliquo potest homo salutem assequi et vivere vita hominis et vita Dei secundum spiritum, qui ex Deo est, nisi in hoc Filio hominis et Dei."

[89] "Induimini Dominum Iesum Christum," *Sermo* 208.2–4 (*h* XIX: 19–20).

[90] "Induimini Dominum Iesum Christum," *Sermo* 208.8, 1–15 (*h* XIX: 22): "Exponit autem Paulus Adam formam Christi ob similitudinem. Nam sicut in Adam omnes moriuntur, ita et in Christo omnes vivificabuntur. De

is the one who teaches us by word of doctrine and by example, how we ought to walk by the spirit."[91] The goal, as he puts it elsewhere, is the "coincidence of the will" by which the human propagated according to Adam is also propagated according to Christ through rebirth and thus seeks to become "heavenly like Christ and a son of God."[92]

Another significant sermon in the Brixen corpus highlights the notion of *deformitas-difformitas-Adeitas* in relation to Christ as exemplar. Cusanus is commenting on a text from Matthew 22, where Jesus addresses paying taxes to Caesar. The sermon itself is used to stress conformity to the image of Christ over against the devil, who deceives with the temptations of the world.[93] The first half deals chiefly with the contrast between God and the world, the second half with the exhortation to flee the temptations of the world. In the context of the latter, he argues that resisting such temptation is little more than conforming to the image God has given humanity, even though it is blighted with sin:

> Thus it has turned to how our nature is the coin of God. For according to the image of God we are that which we are, and from this the likeness of the Son of God, who is the living image of God, receives its impression that is from God the Father, who configures us to the Son. And since we ourselves were made servants of the prince of this world through sin, this image of ours, disfigured and unrecognizable through contracted blight, might be purged and reformed to the true image of God, the Son of God, who redeemed us and translated us from the reign of the servitude of sin to his reign, that we might be "heirs of

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uno Adam terreno mors intrat in omnes, de uno Adam caelesti vita intrat in omnes. Ob hoc enim nominator Christus Adam, quia ab ipso in omnes procedit filiatio Dei, sicut a primo Adam procedit omnis humanae propagationis filiatio. Et sicut delictum unius Adae transit in omnes ab eo propagatos filios, sic iustitia."

[91] "Induimini Dominum Iesum Christum," *Sermo* 208.9, 20–23 (*h* XIX: 23): "Christus autem est, qui nos docet verbo doctrinae et exemplo, quemadmodum spiritu ambulare debemus."

[92] "Salutem humani generis," *Sermo* 225.3, 1–17 (*h* XIX: 139): "Christiani enim spiritu Dei aguntur, quoniam in ipsis non est voluntas humana, sed nec carnis, scilicet muliebris, nec viri, scilicet virilis; generis enim humani voluntas complicat voluntatem carnis seu mulieris et viri, et in una voluntate est alia. Nam quid vult mulier ut mulier nisi virum, et quid vult vir ut vir nisi mulierem. Et haec coincidentia voluntatum est in humano genere, ut vita secundum Adam propagetur. Sic inter animam et spiritum, qui Deus est, nexus quidam oritur, quando anima desponsatur Deo, ut ipsa non velit nisi sponsum suum, et sic in voluntate eius non est nisi sponsus sicut in voluntate sponsi non est nisi sponsa. Ex hac coincidentia voluntatum renascitur omnis, qui secundum Christum propagatur, et fit uti Christus caelestialis et Dei filius."

[93] "Ostende mihi numisma," *Sermo* 249, 6–7 (*h* XIX: 309).

> God and co-heirs of him." And he gave us the superscription of freedom, that we might be his; and as for Christ himself, so for Christians; as he is an heir, so are we co-heirs; and as he is the natural Son, we are sons by adoption.[94]

He plays on the coin in the gospel text to frame humanity as the image of God that has been "disfigured" and Christ as the "true image of God" toward which the rational soul should conform itself. Christ is the object of conformity and the means by which one attains to divine filiation, the very goal of *christiformitas*. Through conformity to Christ, that which was deformed is now reformed and the created nature of humanity attains likeness to the divine.

Christiformitas and the Imitation of Christ

Christ is the object and exemplar for conformity within the framework of *christiformitas* and thus conformity to that exemplar is achieved through the imitation of Christ. The faithful "put on" Christ by imitating virtues enfolded in him at the hypostatic union.[95] Consequently, he becomes the object for active conformity toward the goal of *christiformitas*. This line of argumentation fits firmly within the *imitatio Christi* tradition of the Middle Ages.[96] In one sermon, Cusanus uses imitation language in what will become a fortuitous twist on the monastic counsels of perfection, suggesting that the doctrine of Christ is not only words, but more so an

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[94] "Ostende mihi numisma," *Sermo* 249.21, 1–17 (*h* XIX: 314): "Unde est advertendum quod nostra substantia est numisma Dei. Secundum enim Dei imaginem id sumus quod surnus, et ob hoc in nobis similitudo Filii Dei, quae est imago Dei vivi, recipit impressionem sui esse a Deo Patre, qui nos configuravit Filio. Et quia nos facti fuimus servi principis huius mundi per peccatum, haec nostra imago foedata et per contractam rubiginem incognoscibilis per veram Dei imaginem Filium Dei fuit purgata et reformata, qui nos redemit et transtulit nos de hoc regno servitutis peccati ad regnum suum, ut simus 'heredes Dei et coheredes sui.' Et dedit nobis libertatis superscriptionem, ut simus sui; et sicut ipse Christus, ita nos Christiani, et sicut ipse heres, ita nos coheredes, et sicut ipse Filius naturalis, nos filli adoptive."

[95] On the *complicatio-explicatio* dialectic applied to the virtues being enfolded in the hypostatic union, see "Agnus in crucis," *Sermo* 122.13, 25–37 (*h* XVIII: 9).

[96] Giles Constable has argued for three basic streams of the medieval *imitatio Christi* tradition: a predominantly early medieval emphasis on the imitation of Christ's divinity, including the language of *imago Dei* and conformity to Christ; a high medieval development toward the moral imitation of Christ's humanity; and a late medieval imitation of Christ's sufferings, such as the stigmata, though all three coexisted in the late Middle Ages, Constable, *Three Studies*, 143–248. Cusanus's ideas comport well with the first two, especially his understanding of *fides caritate formata* as *christiformitas* and deification as the result of *christiformitas*, though not the third.

imitation of his deeds and virtues. It is also the imitation of him personally as exemplar and that requires putting on the form of Christ through imitation:

> Elsewhere he said, "I have given you an example, that whatever I do, you should also do." If therefore we would desire to discern the doctrine, by which he gave peace to souls, even felicity, then we should act according to the example handed down to us through the teaching [*magistrum*] of this doctrine; for that doctrine does not consist in word and sermon, but in imitation. For if anyone should know all the counsels (*evangelia*) of the mind, he would not be perfect afterwards, but it would be required that he put on the form of the Son of God through imitation. Whoever also follows him as a minister, in whom lives the will of the Lord, he will be in the place of Christ. Thus the service is [one of] following or imitation. Therefore he said, whoever "would serve me, must follow me." In this sentence he considers no one to become perfectly virtuous who ignores Christ; for whoever ignores is not able to imitate; but Christ is the form of the exemplar, which perfects to such a degree and blesses with that felicity, which attains filiation and possession of the heredity of the king and the immortal kingdom.[97]

The faithful—monastic, clerical, and lay alike—take the form of Christ by imitating his person. Conformity to Christ as exemplar alone makes one *christiform*, but this is primarily through an imitation of Christ's virtuous example. Moreover, even the desire for conformity is itself a reflection of *christiformitas*. He later suggests that the soul cannot love God "unless it has the form of Christ [*forma Christi*] in it." Using a favorite Cusan biblical text from Philippians 2 regarding Christ's willingness to suffer even to the point of death, he presents imitating Christ in this fashion as a "form and imitation" by which "Christ is formed" in the faithful, who in turn "accept the form of the Son of God" that enables them to "attain to the glory of the Father."[98]

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[97] "Ut filii lucis ambulate," *Sermo* 273.4, 1–20 (*h* XIX: 512): "Alibi ait: 'Exemplum dedi vobis, ut quemad modum ego feci, ita et vos faciatis.' Si igitur discere voluerimus doctrinam, quae dat requiem animinabus scilicet felicitatem, tunc facere debemus iuxta exemplar nobis per magistrum huius doctrinae traditum; nam illa doctrina non consistit in verbo et sermone, sed in imitatione. Si quis enim sciret omnia evangelia menti, non esset propterea perfectus, sed requiritur, quod per imitationem induat formam Filii Dei. Qui autem sequitur ipsum tamquam minister, in quo vivit voluntas domini, ille erit ubi Christus. Unde ministerium est sequela seu imitatio. Ideo ait: Qui 'mihi ministrat, me sequatur.' In hac sententia patet nullum perfecte virtuosum fieri, qui Christum ignorat; quem enim ignorat, imitari nequit; sed Christus est forma exemplaris, quae perficit tantum et felicitat illa felicitate, qua pervenitur ad filiationem et hereditatis possessionem regis et regni immortalis."

[98] "Hoc sentite in nobis," *Sermo* 277.23, 1–16 (*h* XIX: 561): "Et nota: ex quo anima se conformat illi, quod amat, et dum se amat, se sibi conformat. Et qui a se non habet, ut sit et vivat, non se amat, quando se amat. Sed si Deum amat, a quo habet esse et vivere, cuius est imago, et se non amat, ut illum magis amet, tunc se amat, ut

The means to obtaining *christiformitas*, then, is to "put on" Christ by imitating his virtues. One way Cusanus parses this in his later Brixen sermons is by contrasting the exterior man with the interior man. Christ was an exemplar for the victory of the internal over the external through his temptation in the desert, when he "mystically" (*mystice*) left the world:

> Thus when "he is in the desert" and also dominated the flesh through fasting and vigilance, then the tempter attacks him strongly, indeed Satan tempts him not with food or drink, but by vain glory, as we are taught. The Christian is led by the Spirit, which everyone receives in regeneration, that he might desert (*deserat*) the old life, of which he resigned, and make the old obedient and subject to the new interior man; for in the old man the exterior dominated, even of the sensible, which is mortal, and condemned the interior man. In the new *christiform* [man], it is necessary that conversion occur, so that the interior which is restored to men through faith and trust in the word of God might dominate the exterior.[99]

Christ dominated the "exterior man" through the "interior man" by resisting temptation, even though he was the maximal unity of the divine with the human. He therefore serves as exemplar for how the faithful should do the same. Those who have been renewed interiorly through "faith and trust in the word of God" now tame their flesh exteriorly in order that they might bring it into conformity with the interior and make it *christiform*. Cusanus says elsewhere that the interior man "is capable of being like Christ," not an exact likeness, but that of a "progeny" (*sequela*) which is transformed into conformity to Christ: "For as the Lord who is the Son of God put on the 'form of a servant,' so the servants who are sons of Adam put on the form of the Lord in baptism, where they are anointed with the oil of chrismation, that they might become

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Augustinus super Iohannem homilia [CXXIII] pulchre deducit. Non potest autem anima Deum amare, nisi in ipsa sit forma Christi, qui solus nos instruit verbo et exemplo, quomodo Deum Pattern amare possumus, scilicet per eius formam et imitationem. Et ideo id quod in Christo credimus, scilicet oboedientiam usque ad mortem in nobis si senserimus, tunc formatur in nobis Christus, et accipimus formam Filii Dei, per quam ad gloriam Patris pertingimus."

[99] "Haec omnia dabo tibi," *Sermo* 271.6, 8–28 (*h* XIX: 494): "Unde dum 'est in deserto' et iam per ieiunium et vigilias carnem domavit, tunc adest fortiori temptator, scilicet Satan qui non de esu et potu temptat, sed de vana gloria, uti hic docemur. A spiritu, quem quisque in regeneratione recipit, Christianus agitatur, ut veterem vitam, cui resignavit deserat et faciat novo interiori homini veterem oboedientem et subiectum; nam in veteri homine exterior dominabatur, scilicet sensibilis, qui est mortalis, et interior perdidit vires. In novo christiformi oportet conversionem fieri, scilicet quod interior recuperatis viribus per fidem et confidentiam verbi Dei dominetur exteriori."

christiform."[100] Christ is the object of imitation, but more concretely his virtues are that which the faithful imitate. The faithful put on Christ as Savior by imitating his virtue and are as a consequence vivified along with him. Putting on Christ is the imitation of his "incorruptible virtues" in place of the "corruptible desires" of humanity. Through this, the interior man conforms to Christ, in whose image it was created. So "whoever receiving his form puts on Christ, he enters into the form of Christ and may become a Christian or *christiform*."[101]

The primary theological idiom he uses to express these *christiform* works is the scholastic notion of *fides caritate formata*, or "faith formed by love."[102] At one point, he speaks of the four cardinal virtues as moral expressions of the rational soul, but still insufficient for blessedness. Instead, it is the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love that form faith and make it capable of salvation.[103] He likens the works performed in pursuit of *fides caritate formata* to Christ's first miracle of changing water into wine in John 2. Just as the wine Jesus created out of water was

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[100] "Domine, adiuva me," *Sermo* 272.13, 1–17 (*ñ* XIX: 503): "Unde ut me capias, loquor de spiritu seu interiore homine, secundum quem esse debemus Christiani. Ille enim interior homo, qui non antiquatur, sed semper manet supra tempus in omni aetate exterioris hominis, potest esse similis Christo. Dico similis non praecisa similitudine, quae attingi nequit, sed quadam sequela, quae in quolibet est alia, sicut humanitatis incorruptibilem speciem omnes homines participant licet unus aliter quam alius. Quare haec transformatio, per quam homo in spiritu seu interiori homine transformatur semper, quamdiu homo est homo, ceteris paribus fieri potest. Sicut enim dominus qui Filius Dei 'formam servi' induit, ita servi qui filii Adae formam domini in baptismate induunt, ubi loti chrismate unguntur, ut sint christiformes."

[101] "Plenitudo legis est dilectio," *Sermo* 265.20, 1–17 (*ñ* XIX: 444): "Hoc induere est se vestire virtutibus incorruptibilibus mortificando corruptibilia desideria et induendo incorruptibilia, scilicet iustitiam, pietatem, veritatem, pacem, caritatem et cetera huiusmodi. Illa enim sunt membra interioris hominis, qui secundum Deum creatus est, quemadmodum illa in Christo capite reperimus. Unde hoc induere habet adhuc aliam considerationem; nam qui Christum induit eius formam recipiendo, ille intrat in Christi formam et fit Christianus seu christiformis. Et ideo sicut Christus mortuus est propter peccata hominum, ut peccata seu corpus peccati moriatur, ita et illius peccata moriuntur in morte Christi et ipse 'in Christo resurgit.' Omnia enim conformiter in eo fiunt, quae in Christo credit facta, qui Christi formam induit."

[102] On this formula and its use in the late medieval tradition, see Heiko Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Durham, NC: The Labyrinth Press, 1983), 146–84, and Ozment, *The Age of Reform*, 22–42, 231–39.

[103] "Dominabuntur populis," *Sermo* 248.20, 1–8 (*ñ* XIX: 304): "Adbuc attende quomodo omnes virtutes ad felicitatem non sufficiunt, nisi adsit virtus infusa, scilicet caritas. Nam sicut prudentia est forma virtutum humanarum, sic caritas format virtutes, ut sint formatae forma divina, quae solum est Deo accepta. Unde iustitia quae non est formata caritate, illa non est vera et viva iustitia, sed potius dus imago deficiens."

"wine formed with water," so too "is man more inwardly perfected and informed by the form, which perfects him, which is the form of God or of Christ our God."[104] The external works of the believer conform to the Spirit at work in faith, compelling the individual toward likeness with the form of Christ: "So when the Spirit of Jesus is sent into the human soul, he makes it *christiform*, and its virtue and working shows this to be true. For by the fruits will you know them; for when the works are *christiform*, they necessarily proceed from the soul of the *christiform*."[105] Those who have a "formed faith," he says elsewhere, are in fact "*christiform* in virtues" because they have in themselves the "Christ who is the virtue of virtues."[106] The clearest expression of a *fides caritate formata* in the context of *christiformitas* comes through martyrdom. Christ's death alone is perfect and therefore merits eternal life. A martyr's death does not merit eternal life because it is only a contracted form of that perfect death which belongs to Christ. Nevertheless, it is an expression of *christiformitas* using an analogue to faith formed by love—the Augustinian *gratia gratum faciens*, or the sanctifying grace by which one cooperates with God: "But the death of the martyrs testifies that they are *christiform* and living in the grace which makes one acceptable (*in gratia gratum faciente*) and therefore by the merit of the death of Christ communicated to them through grace they are the justified and then sanctified."[107] Moral imitation of Christ as exemplar,

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[104] "Quodcumque dixerit vobis, facite," *Sermo* 263.27, 1–8 (*fi* XIX: 427): "Requireretur igitur donum communicationis artis. Haec communicatio Spiritus Sancti, de qua Apostolus dicit, est per quam perficitur interior homo et informatur forma, quae perficit ipsum, quae est forma verbi Dei seu Christi Dei nostri, sicut in hoc miraculo, ubi Christus voluntate aquam transsubstantiavit in vinum sine eo quod loqueretur."

[105] "Quodcumque dixerit vobis, facite," *Sermo* 263.27, 15–21 (*fi* XIX: 304): "Sic dum spiritus Iesu immittitur in animam humanam, facit ipsam christiformem, et virtus atque operatio ipsius hoc verum ostendunt. A fructibus enim eorum cognoscetis eos; quando enim opera sunt christiformia, necessario illa procedunt ab anima christiformi."

[106] "Loquimini ad petram coram eis," *Sermo* 274.33, 19–23 (*fi* XIX: 533): "Potest dici quod habens fidem formatam, quia talis est christiformis in virtutibus, quae Christus sunt, ille in se habet testimonium de Christo qui est virtus virtutum."

[107] "Ecce ascendimus Hierosolymam," *Sermo* 270.10, 8–11 (*fi* XIX: 491): "Sed mors martyrum testificatur eos christiformes et in gratia gratum faciente exsistentes et ideo merito mortis Christi eis via gratiae commurucato iustificatos et sanctificatos."

as the one in whom all the virtues are enfolded, is the means by which one becomes *christiform* and merits the salvation attainable only through such conformity to him.

Christiformitas and Deification

The goal of conformity to Christ through imitation of his person and virtues is salvation, which Cusanus identifies as deification. He first refers to deification as filiation, or adoption, in his 1445 treatise *De filiatione Dei*, and the theme runs throughout his sermons. In the sermons, however, *christiformitas* is essentially a parallel with *filiation* and another cognate, *deiformitas*.[108] Deification properly speaking in the sermons is *deiformitas*. Again, he sets this in the context of pursuing salvation through perfection. *Deiformitas* is the result of works that conform to the divine and thus merit grace:

> If therefore anyone merits grace from works, this is not from himself, because the works themselves are pleasing and acceptable to God, but because they conform to divine works: Like a son he does that which he sees a father do. Whoever therefore does as the kind God does, he is a son of God; for he does the works of his father. Therefore Paul in Ephesians 5 exhorts that we become "imitators of God, as dearest sons." Moreover God "is kind" even "over the ungrateful and evil"; for so he ought to be one who desires to be pleasing to God as a son to a father. Therefore the soul, from which the likeness of divine virtue emanates and becomes deiform (*deiformis*) by virtuous work, that perfection is accepted not by nature, but by grace. For his "reward will be great." Therefore our soul is the living image of God and is able to make itself in likeness to God, and this is to receive in itself the more deiform (*deiformiorem*) soul at great price.[109]

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[108] Hermann Schnarr, "Die Cusanische Hinführung des Menschen zu Jesus Christus in den Sermones: Wer den ganzen und wahren Menschen sucht, ist auf dem Weg zu Jesus Christus," *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 31 (2006), 130.

[109] "Perfectus omnis erit, si sit ut magister eius," *Sermo* 192.2, 12–30 (*h* XIX: 383): "Si igitur quis meretur gratiam ex operibus, hoc est ex eo, quia opera sua sunt Deo grata et accepta, quia divinis operibus conformia: Ille ut filius facit quae viderit Pattern facere. Qui igitur facit ut Deus benignus, ille Dei filius est; facit enim opea Patris sui. Ita Paulus ad Ephesios, exhortatur nos, ut simus 'imitatores Dei, sicut filii carissimi.' Deus autem 'benignus est' etiam 'super ingratos et malos'; sic etiam esse debet ille, qui vult esse Deo gratus ut filius patri. Anima igitur, de qua divinae virtutis emanat similitudo et a virtute operatio deiformis, illa perfectionem adepta est non ex natura, sed ex gratia. Nam 'multa erit merces' eius. Anima igitur nostra est viva Dei imago et potest se ipsam facere Deo similiorem, et hoc est recipere in se secundum multam mercedem deiformiorem spiritum."

In this scheme, one merits grace by conforming to the divine exemplar and through the works which approximate that exemplar becomes perfect, or *deiform*. Later, Cusanus compares *deiformitas* with likeness to the rational soul as the image of God. That image becomes *deiform* when the rational soul conforms to its exemplar, divine wisdom. As God raised Adam out of the dirt in his own likeness, "so wisdom raises the rational soul as though it were a power in emptiness and darkness and ignorance to its own likeness from power (*potentia*) into act, that it might be intellective (*intelligens*) and deiform (*deiformis*)." By conforming itself to wisdom, the rational soul attains perfection and "indestructible life" (*vita immarcessibilis*).[110] In each of these instances, becoming *deiform* is equivalent with the Dionysian attaintment of perfection through conformity to the divine exemplar, be it the Father or wisdom, and this perfection results in eternal life through deification.

Cusanus also uses filiation to express the relationship of *christiformitas* to deification. Early in the Brixen period, he presented filiation as an adoption through grace, by which one becomes a co-heir with Christ. Following Galatians 4:6, this adoption is accomplished by the Spirit and leads to the perfection of souls.[111] He melds it later with *christiformitas* in various ways. In one sermon, he identifies *christiformitas* and filiation with *fides caritate formata*. Dealing with Jesus' miraculous healing of a little girl in Luke 8 according to her faith, Cusanus describes this as an example of *christiform* filiation. The little girl has a "faith that saves" and her soul "formed through faith crossed into the filiation of Jesus." As a result of this formed faith that makes her an adopted "daughter" of God the Father, "she is *christiform*, since he molds the

[110] "Missus est Gabriel," *Sermo* 226.25, 7–15 (*h* XIX: 151): "Sicut creator de terra in sui similitudinem erexit Adam 'et inspiravit in faciem eius spiraculum vitae,' sic sapientia rationalem animam quasi potentiam adhuc vacuam et tenebrosam atque ignorantem erigit in sui similitudinem de potentia in actum, ut sit intelligens et deiformis. Et pro complemento perfectionis infundit sibi spiritum, ut sit in spiritum vivum vita conformi sapientiae, quae est vita immarcessibilis."

[111] "Ubi venit plenitude temporis, misit Deus Filium suum," *Sermo* 169.9–11 (*h* XVIII: 228–30).

form of Christ in her."[112] This account signifies that a formed faith is equivalent with filiation, or adoption, and that filiation is the means by which one becomes *christiform*. The relationship between the two is somewhat different in Cusanus's *Adeitas* sermon. There he speaks of the faithful becoming sons of God at the resurrection. He plays on another medieval scholastic distinction—*meritum de congruo* and *meritum de condigno*—to suggest that those damned at the resurrection will receive what they have merited in their lives, while the *christiform* will receive their judgment according to both the merits of Christ and the merits of their works in conjunction with the grace given by Christ.[113] Because they have been *christiform* in their lives, they will likewise be raised as *christiform* sons of God to eternal life. The *christiform* have already been changed into the image of Christ and as such will merit eternal life at the resurrection.[114] Though the exact theological connections change, in these examples filiation is associated with a *christiformitas* achieved through moral virtue that merits salvation.

Both *deiformitas* and filiation point to the eschatological role *christiformitas* plays for Cusanus. Discussing the resurrection of the dead in comment on 1 Corinthians 15, he describes corruptible flesh taking on incorruptibility in *christiform* terms. At the resurrection, "the *christiform* become heavenly in Christ, as they were earthly in Adam."[115] The Adam-Christ motif

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[112] "Puella surge," *Sermo* 252.22, 2–9 (*h* XIX: 332): "'Confide' dixit, ut non haesitet aliquo modo ex accepta experientia fidem salvare. Dicit 'filia,' ut intelligat animam per formatam fidem in filiationem Iesu transite. Sicut enim pater in filia vivit, quae hoc habet quod est filia a patre, ita Christus in anima fideli, quae hoc habet quod est Dei Patris filia a Christo; ipsa enim est per fidem christiformis, quia formam Christi intra se gestat."

[113] "Loquere et exhortare," *Sermo* 260.14, 1–7 (*h* XIX: 401): "Immutantur igitur fideles in ipso in filios Dei. Quae immutatio cum fiat ex merito Christi dono et gratia Dei concurrente merito hominis, tun non omnes qui resurgent immutabuntur, ut fiant in resurrectione christiformes, sed unusquisque in ordine suo sicut meruit: primo Christus, deinde hi qui sunt Christi."

[114] "Loquere et exhortare," *Sermo* 260.15, 13–20 (*h* XIX: 402): "Qui igitur ad iudicium condemnationis resurgent, ibunt in supplicium, prout meruerunt. Qui autem ad vitam aeternam resurrexerint, ad christiformitatem mutabuntur, cui similes erunt, ut Christus sit 'omnia in omnibus.' Unde haec mutatio vocatur regeneratio in Christo, quando vetus homo transit in novam creaturam conformem Christo."

[115] "Si quis non amat Dominum Iesum, sit anathema," *Sermo* 238.15, 6–9 (*h* XIX: 217): "Explanat autem quod per spiritum Christi vivificantem fit resurrectio ac quod christiformes fiunt caelestes in Christo, sicut fuerunt terreni

again creates the contrast between the *Adeitas* of human nature and the image of Christ to which the faithful conform themselves. Conversely, those who are not conformed to the image of Christ receive the corresponding punishment. In his 1456 Easter sermon, Cusanus compares the fates of the "good" and the "bad" at the resurrection. Whereas the good are configured to Christ in great joy and never suffer again, the bad who did not share in Jesus' sufferings are as a result not redeemed by him nor raised to enter glory. "Thus the soul, which is not *christiform*, is after the resurrection in the body as in a dense darkness, and it is a most sad soul, whose will gives up hope of all happiness. It has no movement of life, but is dragged as dead weight of the body into hell."[116] *Christiformitas* then refers not only to the imitation of Christ through works, but also correlates with the salvation of the soul through deification and with the judgment of the soul that does not attain it.

Christiformitas and the Church

The various dimensions of *christiformitas* thus far have concentrated on the image's role in personal reform. There is another picture necessary to complement this one and it will bring *christiformitas* into relation with the mystical body metaphor. There is an ecclesiastical notion of conformity to Christ that Cusanus plies in several contexts.[117] One in particular deals with the illuminative function of the priesthood and the relationship between it and the attainment of *christiformitas* by the faithful. It was already noted that Cusanus related proclamation to the

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in Adam."

[116] "Consummatum est." *Sermo* 229.11, 1–6 (*h* XIX: 164): "Unde anima, quae non est christiformis, post resurrectionem est in corpore ut in densa tenebra, et est maestissima anima, cuius voluntas est de omni laetitia desperata. Illa non habet motum vitae, sed ut mortua pondere corporis ad inferna trahitur etc."

[117] It is important to remember, as Ladner argues, that while personal reform images were in the first millennium of Christianity left at the individual level, it eventually became commonplace to apply them to the church corporately and even to society, Ladner, *Idea of Reform*, 423. The ecclesiological character of *christiformitas* has been noted, but not necessarily developed in various places, including Euler, "Entwicklungsgeschichte Etappen," 87; Reinhardt, "Das Thema," 74; and Weier, "Christus als 'Haupt'," 167.

miraculous catch of fish.[118] He goes on to delineate how the clergy do this: by opening the Scriptures and healing human ignorance. Human nature is infirm in its ignorance, but Scripture like medicine heals invisibly. Through a spiritual understanding of the text, the rational soul "ascends to the word of life, which is hidden in Sacred Scripture, and receives it as a saving medicine from the physician or curate, who represents Christ." It is the preacher who, by uncovering the "invisible power" under the letter, "liberates the infirm intellect from the ignorance that obfuscates him and incarcerates him."[119] Like the comparison of preaching with the miraculous catch of fish, this "invisible power" is rooted in the "divine power of Christ that liberates the soul from ignorance or blindness, just as he makes evangelists from laymen (*idiotis*), and straightens the crooked souls and justifies and tames the mad, and so on for the rest."[120] The very act of preaching is an exercise in conformity to Christ on the part of the clergy. Cusanus elsewhere describes how they do this as "stewards of the mysteries of God." Christ is the "apostle of apostles" and through his commission the apostles carry out his legation daily in preaching.[121] Such preaching is conformity to Christ in the sense that Jesus himself was the original *christiform* preacher who brought about salvation through his self-presentation. He

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[118] "Venite, post me," *Sermo* 253.17, 5–12 (*h* XIX: 135).

[119] "Domine, adiuva me," *Sermo* 272.9, 6–24 (*h* XIX: 502): "Unde anima fidelis infirma esse potest, et quamdiu se cognoscit infirmam, adhuc vivit in ipsa spiritus cognitionis. Illa accedit ad verbum vitae, quod in Sacra Scriptura est absconditum, et recipit ipsum tamquam medicinam salutarem a medico seu curato, qui vices gerit Christi. Tunc receptum 'verbum veritatis' liberat animam, sicut 'verbum veritatis' magistti liberat infirmum intellectum ab ignorantia, quae ipsum obfuscat et 'in tenebris' incarcerat. Unde sicut herba non curat infirmitatem corporalem nisi per invisibilem virtutem, quae sub visibili colore et figura latet, sic Scriptum non liberat animam infirmam per corticem aut visibiles litteras seu figuras, sed per virtutem invisibilem, quae latet sub zo littera, quam intellectus videt mediante fide Christi; sicut medicus videt virtutem herbae mediante fide Hippocratis, credit tamen Hippocrati, qui sibi virtutem eius revelavit."

[120] "Domine, adiuva me," *Sermo* 272.10, 14–18 (*h* XIX: 502): "Et est virtus illa divina Christi animas liberans ab ignorantia seu caecitate, ut quando fecit de idiotis evangelistas, et incurvatas animas rectificans et iustificans et phreneticas mansuescens, et ita de reliquis."

[121] "Sic nos existimet homo," *Sermo* 256.2, 9–12 (*h* XIX: 360): "Igitur evangelizatio Christi est dispensatio mysteriorum Dei, qui omnem scripturam sic aperit quod in omnibus reperitur Christus."

preached the "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" that the faithful might put on his form, and through it be led to filiation and conformity to him as exemplar.[122]

It is not merely the illuminative function of clergy that conforms to Christ, but indeed the clergy themselves must conform what they teach to him. This time it is a matter of content. *Christiformitas* is an attribute of the cleric concerned with what he teaches. The *christiform* teacher conforms the content and goal of his teaching to his exemplar, Christ:

> And see that the *christiform* teacher ought to teach the way of God in truth and never to fear in this. The teacher ought not be occupied by something else, which speaks to viators as viators, unless he shows that is the "way of God in truth." For every *viator* "not having a city that lasts" does not reach for God through the corruptible and mortal world and is not worthy unless shown the true way, therefore he should teach it in truth; for the desire of the spirit does not hunger and seek apart from the good, which is good, but wanders from the way unless it is made known. But there is only one teacher who came from God and knows the way to him, which he taught in truth, that thus all who proceed through it, proceed undoubtedly to God. Moreover, Christ the teacher taught the way by word and example. And whoever receives him, apprehends the way, the truth, and the life, which is God.[123]

Here he reprises the image of the church as a "school of reason," where Christ is the teacher providing an example in word and deed for all, including the clergy. The clergy imitate Christ in their teaching by conforming to that which Christ taught. They are to model what they preach after what Christ came to do, which means the clergy are to present Christ so the *viator* might apprehend him. This will prove significant again for Cusanus when he urges the clergy in Brixen

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[122] "Sic nos existimet homo," *Sermo* 256.12, 17–26 (*h* XIX: 365): "Hic magister venit, qui et Filius atque 'imago Dei invisibilis,' et habuit 'verba vitae aeternae', quae sunt verba vivificantia imaginem eius creatam, et aperuit nobis 'mysteria regni caelorum' ac quod ipse foret forma seu via, quam si quis in hoc mundo reciperet, ipsum scilicet hie induendo, talis in se reciperet spiritum eius, qui eum vitaliter pasceret et duceret usque ad filiationem Dei Patris sui et conformitatem eius in gloria regni caelestis."

[123] "Ostende mihi numisma," *Sermo* 249.9, 1–19 (*h* XIX: 310): "Et attende quod magister christiformis viam Dei in veritate docere debet et in hoc neminem timere. Non debet magister in allo occupari, qui viatoribus loquitur ut viatoribus, nisi ut 'viam Dei in veritate' ostendat. Nam viator omnis 'non habens hic manentern eivitatem' per corruptibilem et mortalern mundum ad Deum tendit et non indiget nisi ostensore viae verae, ita quod illam doceat in veritate; nam desiderium spiritus non nisi bonum, quod Deus est, appetit et quaerit, sed errat a via nisi ostensor adsit. Sed non est nisi unus magister, qui venit a Deo et seit viam ad ipsum, quam docuit in veritate, ita quod omnes, qui per illam pergunt, indubie ad Deum pertingunt. Docuit autem Christus magister viam verbo et exemplo. Et qui ipsum recipit, viam, veritatem et vitam, quae Deus est, apprehendit."

to *evangelizare Christum*, which has less to do with the *evangelizare* and more to do with the *Christum*.[124]

The cleric as *christiform* extends to his life, as well. Generally speaking, all are to imitate Christ as the consummate teacher and seek to be perfect as he is. Here, however, he uses Paul as an example of one who was *christiform* by following Christ and becoming perfect. In the same way that Paul followed Christ to perfection, clergy are to emulate him and "follow the doctrine of the teacher in word and example" so they too might "be transferred from the school of this world to the perfection of the teacher."[125] This is essentially conformity to Christ by imitation of Paul, who himself was like Christ. Cusanus makes a similar connection in his sermon on the miraculous catch. He notes that the apostles were called to their apostolate by Christ's command to follow him. "Therefore whoever desires to exercise the apostolic office ought to be called by Jesus so that he might come into it, and not cast himself into it, so that he might come to conformity to the life of Jesus."[126] The preacher, then, should commit himself to the will of the Father in the same way that the fishermen apostles Andrew and Peter did:

> And like Christ carried out the will of the Father, so also the preacher should deny himself, in whom alone lives the spirit of Jesus, and it is necessary that he "carry his cross" as Christ, always prepared "to be obedient even to death," just as these "two brothers" would die, who forsook all things for the one voice commanding them not to take out the net from the sea, perfectly following Christ by bearing the cross in life, in which they *christiformiter* gave back their soul to God.[127]

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[124] On the role of Christology in the sermons, see Euler, "Proclamation of Christ," 89–104. It is not always clear how Cusanus defines *evangelizare*, or even how he understands the proclamatory function of the clergy. At times, the cleric is a *magister*, at times he is a *praedicator*, and at other times he is more generally called to *evangelizare*.

[125] "Perfectus omnis erit, si sit ut magister eius," *Sermo* 192.7, 27–31 (*h* XIX: 386): "[I]gitur et nos, si volumus pertingere ad perfectionem, oportet continue studere, ut sequamur doctrinam magistri verbo et exemplo, ut possimus de schola huius mundi transferri ad perfectionem magisterii."

[126] "Venite, post me," *Sermo* 253.19, 6–9 (*h* XIX: 340): "Qui igitur officium vult apostolicum exercere, oportet ut veniat vocatus a Iesu et non se ingerat et veniat ad conformitatem vitae Iesu."

[127] "Venite, post me," *Sermo* 253.20, 1–10 (*h* XIX: 341): "Et uti Christus voluntatem Patris exsecutus est, ita et praedicator abnegare debet se ipsum, in quo solum vivat spiritus Iesu, et oportet ut 'tollat crucem suam' sicut Christus, semper paratus 'oboedire usque ad mortem,' quemadmodum hi 'duo fratres' fecerunt, qui continuo ad

The preacher obligates himself to follow Christ, as the apostles did. Consequently, that means he should follow Christ even if it means death, as it did for the apostles.

In addition to the clerical component of *christiformitas*, another pertinent application to the church is its corporate character. At numerous times, Cusanus uses the image to describe not just individuals, but communities, a functional sort of parallel to the way in which he spoke of two churches or bodies with regard to the mystical body metaphor. One example contrasts those conformed to Christ as sons of God with those who are united to the "deformity of Satan" and are "angels and ministers" of their "head and prince," the devil. He then adds: "And consider how what might happen to the smallest Christian happens to Christ. For whoever strikes the hand of Peter strikes Peter. Thus all true Christians are members of the one mystical body of Christ, and all false Christians are members of the lying devil."[128] There is a corporate character to those who oppose Christ just as there is a corporate character to those united with Christ. He specifically applies the language of *christiformitas* to these corporate images of opposition to Christ. One important visitation sermon at Neustift in 1455 opposes the *christiform*, who "go from temporal death to eternal life," to the *antichristiani*, who "go from temporal death to eternal death."[129] Similarly, in an already cited 1457 sermon addressing the *ecclesia malignantium* within the church militant, he mentions that such malign characters falsely pretend to be "humble

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unius iussionis vocem non extracto reti de mari omnia reliquerunt, Christum perfecte secuti sunt crucem baiulantes in vita, in qua christiformiter Deo spiritum reddiderunt."

[128] "Ibunt hi in supplicium aeteroum, iusti autem in vitam aetermam," *Sermo* 175.3, 13–4, 6 (*h* XVIII: 274): ""Nam conformes ei filii Dei vocabuntur, quia ipse Filius, et difformes ei ad difformem Satan sociabuntur qui erit eorum caput et princeps, et cuius, ipsi angeli seu ministri, ut evangelium declarat. Et considerandum, quo modo id quod fit minimo christiano fit Christo. Nam qui laedit digitum Petri laedit Petrum. Unde omnes veri christiani sunt membra unius corporis Christi mystici, et omnes falsi christiani sunt membra mendacis diaboli."

[129] "Qui vicerit, possidebit haec," *Sermo* 205.2, 11–19 (*h* XIX: 10): "Vadunt christiformes de morte temporali ad vitam aeternam. Vadunt antichristiani de morte temporali ad mortem aeternam. In civitate, ubi Deus habitat eum hominibus, est fons vitae. Et 'qui vicerit, possidebit haec.' Unde ad fontem vitae non potest quisquam pervenire, nisi vincat et lucretur."

and *christiform*." These he subsequently refers to as *pseudochristiani* in contrast to the *christiform*.[130] Then, in his Judica 1457 sermon, he juxtaposes the devil as the father of lies with the truth of Christ. Those who seek the glory of God are *christiform*, but those who seek their own glory are *sathanici*.[131] In a final important instance, he details for his Brixen congregation a matter of public controversy: the examination of three suspected witches. The sermon itself deals in several places with *christiformitas* as a pattern of reforming the old exterior man according to the new interior man. After addressing a number of issues related to sorcery and witchcraft, however, he exonerates the women as merely confused or "semi-crazy" (*semideliras*) and in need of instruction, but not demonic.[132] In the process, he says that no one can be a Christ-believer (*christifidelis*) unless first renouncing the devil.[133] He then refers again to such examples of occult devotion as opposed to faith in Christ. They prevent one from being perfected in the faith as "true members of Christ" because "in Christ and in his members there can be no power of Satan."[134] These examples reveal a corporate dimension to *christiformitas* and its cognates. They do not refer strictly to individuals, nor are they reform terms applicable only to personal reform. On the contrary, *christiformitas* is as much an ecclesiological term designated for the

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[130] "Domine, adiuva me," *Sermo* 272.17, 1–9 (*fi* XIX: 505): "Sed quomodo cognoscuntur illi omnes pseudochristiani? Dicit Iesus: 'A fructibus eorum'; nam verba et opera ostendunt spiritum, qui est in homine. Non enim potest quis loqui aut operari nisi per motum. Omnis autem motus a spiritu movente oritur; sic exteriora ostendunt interiorem spiritum: sicut oculus est nuntius cordis, lubrici gestus, verba impudica, impudicus oculus voluptates spiritui dominari ostendunt."

[131] "Qui per Spiritum Sanctum semet ipsum obtulit," *Sermo* 276.38, 2–7 (*fi* XIX: 552): "Ecce qui debent reputari christiformes scilicet qui gloriam suam non quaerunt sed gloriam Dei, etiam ad sui contemptum, et sathanici non Dei, sed suam quaerunt usque ad contemptum Dei; primi Deum sibi, secundi se Deo praeferunt."

[132] "Haec omnia dabo tibi," *Sermo* 271.18, 1–3 (*fi* XIX: 499): "Ego examinavi duas ex vetulis et repperi eas semideliras, quae perfecte Symbolum fidei non sciunt."

[133] "Haec omnia dabo tibi," *Sermo* 271.13 (*fi* XIX: 497).

[134] "Haec omnia dabo tibi," *Sermo* 271.15 (*fi* XIX: 497): "[Q]uando personae illae fuerunt fideles et 'membra vera Christi,' quia in Chris tum et in eius membra nihil potest virtus Satanae."

reform of the church in its corporate dimensions as it is a personal reform term designated for the spiritual renewal of the individual.

In the Brixen-era sermons, *christiformitas* functions primarily as an image of personal reform compelling the individual believer toward mystical union with Christ. Using the Dionysian notion of perfection as imitation of the divine to the end of likeness with it, he comes to present conformity to Christ as an imitation of the virtue enfolded in the exemplar that is attained through *fides caritate formata* and results in deification. He incorporates into this framework biblical images such as the Adam-Christ typology, "putting on" Christ through works, and adoption as sons of God and co-heirs with Christ to form his own unique interpretation of the medieval *imitatio Christi*. The other relevant aspect of *christiformitas* is its corporate, ecclesiastical character. Just as Cusanus had adapted the Dionysian ecclesiastical hierarchy to the *corpus mysticum* as image of the church, he does the same with the illuminative role of the clergy. The clergy are the means by which the objective content of Christ is presented to the faithful from the Scriptures. The purpose of this mediation is that all might conform themselves to Christ and ascend toward mystical union with him. *Christiformitas* applies to communities or populations the same as to individuals. There are communities within the church, as there were in the mystical body referents, who oppose Christ, and there are those who conform to Christ and are properly called *christiform*. Conformity to Christ is not solely an individual attainment, but is also corporate since it follows from *christiform* mediation of the Scriptures by *christiform* clergy and eventuates in *christiform* believers. Cusanus will bring these ideas together concretely in his Brixen and Roman reform efforts, where the conformity of the church to its primitive and heavenly ideals follows from the conformity of its clergy to Christ.

Corpus Mysticum, Christiformitas, and Church Reform

The Dionysian concept of hierarchy and participation provided the cardinal reformer the conceptual apparatus he needed to present *corpus mysticum* as an image of the church and *christiformitas* as an image of personal reform over the course of the Brixen sermons. Cusanus's resourceful application of the Dionysian framework furthermore enables him to relate the two concepts and articulate a different paradigm for church reform that will complement the hierocratic or monarchical picture often ascribed to his later diocesan and curial reform efforts. While there is and will remain an authoritarian strain in his reforms, a more salvifically-oriented, mystical approach nonetheless emerges alongside it. He uses the image of the church as a mystical hierarchy connected to Christ to emphasize unity and diversity within the body cutting across different ecclesiastical ranks and spiritual gifts, but at the same time hierarchically orders those ranks and gifts through the illuminative function of the Dionysian hierarchies. Personal reform similarly has as its goal the Dionysian notion of perfection through imitation of the divine, but by employing *christiformitas* as the object of imitation for all, clergy included, and by making that object available to the faithful through the illuminative function of the clergy, he underscores its corporate, ecclesiastical character.

With this move, Cusanus continues the trajectory he began with the use of Dionysian hierarchies earlier in his career. In *De concordantia catholica*, the images of the mystical body and of hierarchy were distinct and independent of one another. Furthermore, as Paul Sigmund has noted, in *De concordantia catholica* there were essentially two hierarchies: a sacramental hierarchy consisting of a Dionysian arrangement of the threefold priesthood and a distinct governmental hierarchy organized into a threefold ecclesiastical order.[135] These hierarchies were

[135] Sigmund, "Medieval and Modern Constitutionalism," 202.

somewhat parallel to the medieval ecclesiological distinction between the *potestas ordinis* and the *potestas iurisdictionis*.[136] After he begins to read Pseudo-Dionysius more closely through Traversari's translation upon his return from Constantinople, Cusanus has a newfound mystical orientation to the structure of the cosmos and, by extension, the church in *De docta ignorantia*.[137] Over the course of the Brixen sermons, as the embattled bishop faces opposition to reform and debate over his theology, he will make continued recourse to his earlier mystical thought regarding the church and the Dionysian tradition inspiring it—extending beyond the Areopagite himself to other Christian Neoplatonists—and he will continue developing his views of hierarchy and participation in service of reform. The hierarchy is largely maintained, but it eventually grows in more of a participatory direction than an authoritarian direction. The two distinct hierarchies of jurisdiction and order in *De concordantia catholica* collapse into one under the aegis of illumination, through which the word descends to the faithful, and the faithful ascend that mystical hierarchy toward perfection in a generally undifferentiated fashion by the imitation of Christ. Church reform must begin by purifying the illuminative function of the priesthood first, which in turn Cusanus assumes (perhaps naively) will result in a church formed to the likeness of its mystical head, Jesus.

Two specific applications to reform will emerge from his hierarchical modification of *corpus mysticum* and *christiformitas*. The first is his view of the medieval counsels of perfection. Over the course of the Brixen episcopacy, Cusanus essentially inverts the evangelical rule. No longer are the triple Christian estates hierarchically ordered according to ascending levels of obedience. He espouses the traditional position as late as a July 1455 visit of the Brixen

[136] This way of framing the distinction owes itself to the present study's supervisor, Paul Robinson.

[137] Bond, "Historical Matrix," 154–58.

parochical church, where he lays out the three estates (*laicorum*, *clericorum*, *monachorum*) from lesser obligation to more using the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. What characterizes each Christian, no matter the estate, is obedience.[138] By late 1455 and early 1456, with the incorporation of the *corpus mysticum* and *christiformitas* metaphors his approach has almost entirely changed, leading him to an inversion of the traditional position. Now, the threefold ordering of the church is parallel, not hierarchical. All three estates are part of the diverse body of the church and each estate is provided with its own means of attaining mystical union through *christiformitas*. In his 1456 sermon on paying taxes to Caesar, he essentially stratifies the estates as he does when discussing the gifts and ranks in his *corpus mysticum* sermons. The Christian is named after Christ and therefore owes obedience to him first, which is expressed then according to one's estate. The monk lives according to his name and therefore commits himself to the discipline of silence, the canon by following the rule, the presbyter by providing for the salvation of others, the rector directing the faithful rightly, and all secular orders in their own places.[139] This is the same course he takes in his 1457 sermon on the counsels of perfection, where perfection follows not from "word and sermon" or the evangelical counsels, but from "putting on the form of the Son of God through imitation."[140] He will employ this strategy in his efforts to reform the religious of Brixen and will incorporate it later in Rome for the higher clergy.

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[138] "Respice de caelo et vide et visita vineam istam," *Sermo* 196.10 (*h* XVIII: 413). Later in this sermon, Cusanus will make his widely repeated claim that "irrational obedience is the consummate and most perfect obedience (*oboedientia igitur irrationalis est consummata oboedientia et perfectissima*)," *Sermo* 196.12, 21–23. On this, see Biechler, *Religious Language*, 151–53; Euler, "'Oboedire est vivere'," 25–38; Herold, "Doctrinae oboedientiae," 167–209; Mandrella, "Reformhandeln und speculatives Denken," 37–51; and O'Malley, *Praise and Blame*, 232.

[139] "Ostende mihi numisma," *Sermo* 249.14–15 (*h* XIX: 311–12).

[140] "Ut filii lucis ambulate," *Sermo* 273.4, 1–20 (*h* XIX: 512).

A second discernible change produced by this application of the Dionysian hierarchies is his conflation of the traditional distinction between *potestas ordinis* and *potestas iurisdictionis*. The two distinct sacramental and ecclesiastical hierarchies of *De concordantia catholica* have become one by the later Brixen period and are subsumed under the illuminative function of the priesthood. The ecclesiastical hierarchy is now subordinate to the word that it communicates through opening the Scriptures and revealing Christ. The clergy find their place not primarily in the governmental structure of the church, but in their illuminative function as teachers of Scripture. This furthermore changes the nature of obedience to the prelate. In his June 1455 visitation of Mount Thaurum in Prettau, Cusanus had articulated a fairly traditional view of submission to ecclesiastical authority when he described the pastoral care of the prelate as one of drawing the sinner to "hearing and obedience." Penitents owe obedience under threat of excommunication because Christ "commanded obedience to those in positions of authority (*praepositis*), even those who are severe, since it is obedience not to man, but to God, from whom all authority comes and of whom they are vicars, even though undeserving."[141] By the end of his Brixen tenure, however, obedience has to do with personal imitation of the Christ revealed through the Scriptures, not "irrational" submission to authoritative dictate. While Cusanus still emphasizes obedience to clergy, it is for the larger goal of attaining *christiformitas* through salvific conformity to the Christ preached rather than obedience to the hierocrat or papal absolutist, as is often ascribed to the cardinal's later papalism. Obedience through conformity to Christ's virtue is "necessary for the *christiform* soul" and extends even to the point of death in order that one might imitiate Christ.[142] In this view, however, the clergy are not recipients, but

[141] "Gaudium erit angelis Dei super uno peccatore paenitentiam agente," *Sermo* 191.3, 18–24 (*h* XVIII: 378): "Ait enim: 'Qui vos audit me audit,' et in sancto Petro principe apostolorum praecipiebat oboediendum praepositis etiam dyscolis, quia non homini sed Deo, a quo omnis potestas et cuius vices, licet immeritus, agit, oboeditur."

[142] "Hoc sentite in nobis," *Sermo* 277.1 (*h* XIX: 556).

agents of obedience, such that the preacher "should deny himself" and "carry his cross" and "be obedient even to death," as the martyrs Andrew and Peter were before them when they "*christiformiter* gave back their souls to God."[143]

This also helps explain the oft-repeated image of legateship in the later sermons that refers primarily to Christ and only derivatively to the ecclesiastic. Cusanus had often spoken of himself or the Roman pontiff as "legate of Christ" in the earlier Brixen period.[144] The primary emphasis later in the sermons rests on Christ's authority as legate and the subordination of all—including clergy—to him. Christ in his incarnation is the "visitor with fullness of authority (*plenitudine potestatis*) as legate of God the Father."[145] He was the "legate of God" whose words were like a "bull of legation" that "brought about faith by his power of *ligandi et solvendi*" because he "had all authority from his Father."[146] As the Son made the Father known and carried no message other than that which the Father gave him, so too does the cleric make Christ known and delivers no other message than that of the Son. Through these and similar applications of the Dionysian hierarchical categories to the reconceptualized reform images of *corpus mysticum* and *christiformitas*, he lays the basic groundwork for a different approach to church reform that will come to bear on the religious and the clergy of Brixen before reaching its apex in his Roman reforms of 1459.

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[143] "Venite, post me," *Sermo* 253.20 (*h* XIX: 341).

[144] "Veniam et curabo eum," *Sermo* 145.5 (*h* XVIII: 109), and "Dies diei eructat verbum," *Sermo* 147.2 (*h* XVIII: 117).

[145] "Domine, adiuva me," *Sermo* 272.7 (*h* XIX: 501).

[146] "Hoc sentite in nobis," *Sermo* 277.29–32 (*h* XIX: 562–63).

CHAPTER FOUR

MONASTIC REFORM IN THE BRIXEN SERMONS

The reform of religious orders in the diocese of Brixen was among Nicholas of Cusa's most pressing concerns. His stated goal of a *perfectam observanciam et reformacionem* had its origins in the observant movement of the late medieval church.[1] He had long acquaintance with the reformed Augustinian congregation at Windesheim, which was influenced by the *Devotio moderna* emerging out of the Low Countries in the fourteenth century.[2] He encountered time and again observant congregations on his legation of 1451–52, such as the Benedictines of Melk and Bursfeld, in addition to the Windesheim Augustinians.[3] Early in his Brixen tenure, the new bishop established a close relationship with the Benedictines at Tegernsee.[4] He would use the Tegernsee monks repeatedly in his monastic visitation and reform efforts later. Consequently, Cusanus had positive models of monastic reform and, though not a monk himself, nonetheless pursued reform in line with the observant movement. Such reform was not as simple, however,

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[1] On the observant movement, see Kasper Elm, "Reform und Observanzbestrebungen im spätmittelalterlichen Ordenswesen: Ein Uberblick," in *Reformbemühungen und Observanzbestrebungen im Spätmittelaterlichen Ordenswesen*, ed. Kasper Elm (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1989), 3–19; Kaspar Elm, "Verfall und Erneuerung des Ordenswesens im Spatmittelalter: Forschungen und Forschungsaufgaben," in *Untersuchungen zu Kloster und Stift*, ed. Max-Planck-Institut für Geschichte (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1980), 188–238; Dieter Martins, "Monastische Reformbewegungen des 15. Jahrhunderts: Ideen—Siele—Resultate," in *Reform von Kirche und Reich zur Zeit der Konzilien von Konztanz (1414–1418)*, ed. Ivan Hlavaček and Alexander Patschovsky (Constance: Universitätsverlag, 1996), 157–81; and Ralph Weinbrenner, *Klosterreform im 15.Jahrhundert zwischen Ideal und Praxis* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1996), 1–23.

[2] On the reforms of the *Devotio moderna*, see John Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life: The Devotio Moderno and the World of the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 154–57 for Windesheim. For Cusanus's acquaintance with the movement, see Meuthen, *Nicholas of Cusa*, 12–15.

[3] Sullivan, "Nicholas of Cusa as Reformer," 411.

[4] Watanabe, *Concord and Reform*, 155–68.

as the bishop might have wished. The observant movement arose from within existing orders, not outside of them, let alone under episcopal supervision. Observant efforts at reform did not go uncontested, but were fraught with divisions over what the ideal of the monastic life was and how the individual house or order should govern itself in accordance with that ideal.[5] The maze of late medieval ecclesiastical jurisdiction also proved an impediment to reform because many orders had attained papal exemption from episcopal authority.[6] Complicating matters more was the involvement of secular authority. Since the earlier Middle Ages, religious foundations had their roots in the patronage of secular rulers, and much of the tenth- and eleventh-century reform associated with Cluny responded to secular patronage. By the fifteenth century, secular rulers in an increasingly territorialized church had recovered a greater degree of sovereignty over the religious in their lands. They could support or oppose reform, and religious houses often looked to the territorial ruler for their protection.[7]

What Cusanus comes to find in Brixen reflects the goals and challenges of the observant movement. He had many observant congregations that shared his basic understanding of the religious life as a means to salvation through conformity to its authoritative rule. He connected unreformed houses with reformed sister houses eager to aid in bringing about observance elsewhere. He reformed the dissolute Poor Clares of Brixen by placing its visitation and reform in the hands of observant Franciscan houses, replacing the abbess with an observant one, and bringing in new nuns from a reformed convent. He was even able to convince a convent existing

[5] For examples of these internal tensions, see Michael Bailey, "Religious Poverty, Mendicancy, and Reform in the Late Middle Ages," *Church History* 72 (2003): 457–483; James D. Mixson, *Poverty's Proprietors: Ownership and Mortal Sin at the Origins of the Observant Movement* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2009); and Michael A. Vargas, *Taming a Brood of Vipers: Conflict and Change in Fourteenth-Century Dominican Convents* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2011).

[6] For Cusanus's attempt to negotiate this, see Thomas Woelki, "Kirchenrecht als Mittel der Reform: Nikolaus von Kues und die Seelsorgeprivilegien der Mendikantenorden," in *Renovatio et Unitas*, 117–36.

[7] For literature, see chapter two, n. 21.

without a rule in Halltal to adopt one he composed for it based on the Augustinian rule.[8] He also faced common opposition. The Benedictine convent of Sonnenburg, the Clares of Brixen, and the Augustinian canons at Neustift at different times each resisted visitation by appealing to the secular ruler, Duke Sigismund, as protector. The Benedictine abbey at St. Georgenberg rejected proposed reforms and Sigismund supported them in doing so. The Stams Cistercians were able to use papal exemption from episcopal jurisdiction to appeal Cusanus's excommunication of their abbot. As events unfolded in the Tyrol, the bishop's approach to reform evolved and he soon moved beyond simple exhortations toward observance of a monastic rule, and in so doing came to incorporate the Dionysian-influenced concepts of ecclesiology and reform he had begun articulating in his Brixen pulpit.

The principle instrument Cusanus used in reforming the monastic congregations of his diocese was episcopal visitation. His official visitations followed the customary procedure of agreeing to terms for the visit with the congregation, and then, ordinarily supported by a team of visitors, he would deliver a sermon, interview the members of the house, and inspect the premises and liturgical books.[9] A more unofficial visit might entail one or another of these elements, but without strict stipulation of the terms. Those terms were not insignificant, since they implied a willingness to accept the reforms proposed by the bishop and his fellow visitors.[10] Cusanus himself only served as primary visitor, however, for two congregations—Sonnenburg and the Poor Clares of Brixen.[11] In other cases, he might participate in the visitation but would place it under the supervision of another observant congregation. While official reform acts

[8] On the nuns at Halltall, see Gerold Fußenegger, "Nikolaus von Kues und die Waldschwestern im Halltal," in *Cusanus Gedächtnisschrift*, 379–427.

[9] For a general survey of what this entails, see Cheyney, *Episcopal Visitation*, 54–103.

[10] This accounts for the intransigence of certain houses toward receiving the bishop.

[11] Hallauer, "Brixener Klarissenkloster," 98.

carried out during the visitations may reflect the traditional legislative side of his approach to monastic reform, the bishops's sermons paint a different picture. They follow from his speculative concept of preaching as illumination and the role it plays in the Dionysian hierarchy, as well as the catechetical function of preaching in his legatine journey and episopacy. Cusanus delivered eight total sermons to the canons at Neustift: one shortly after his return from Rome in 1453; another preached at his first official visitation of the house in December 1454; two at the conclusion of a second round of visitation in late summer/early fall 1455; two in August 1456 at Calixtus III's behest in celebration of victory over the Turks at Belgrade; and finally two in official visitation of Neustift in May 1457.[12] Outside of Neustift, the two remaining sources for monastic reform are the sermon he delivers to the Poor Clares upon episcopal visitation in January 1454, representing his first effort at preaching observant reform, and the two sermons he preached to the Benedictine abbey at Säben on Holy Cross Day (September 14) in 1453 and 1456, respectively, which provide far fewer polemical counterpoints compared to some of the tense offerings at the other houses.[13]

This chapter will assess the changing concepts of monastic reform Cusanus deploys in the visitation sermons during the Brixen tenure. It will survey chronologically the four successive rounds of visitation sermons with attention to his concepts of reform, as well as the historical

[12] "Credit ipse," *Sermo* 134 (*h* XVIII: 66–69); "Quaecumque scripta sunt, ad nostram doctrinam scripta sunt," *Sermo* 166 (*h* XVIII: 213–15); "Induimini Dominum Iesum Christum," *Sermo* 201 (*h* XVIII: 441–443); "Qui vicerit, possidebit haec," *Sermo* 205 (*h* XIX: 9–10); "Laudans invocabo Dominum, et ab inimicis meis salvus ero," *Sermo* 240 (*h* XIX: 228–34); "Suadeo tibi emere a me aurum ignitum et probatum," *Sermo* 241 (*h* XIX: 235–42); "Pater vester caelestis dabit vobis," *Sermo* 282 (*h* XIX: 606–12); and "Sublevatis oculis," *Sermo* 283 (*h* XIX: 613–22). Of those eight sermons, only six are relevant to the discussion at hand, since the summer 1456 visits are entirely independent of reform efforts and address no subjects pertinent to reform.

[13] "Dominus Jesus misit me," *Sermo* 142 (*h* XVIII: 98–99); "Ego si exaltatus fuero," *Sermo* 133 (*h* XVIII: 59–65); and "Crucifixus resurrexit," *Sermo* 245 (*h* XIX: 274–78). He preached an additional three sermons at Wilten, but there is neither external evidence linking them to an official visitation of the Premonstratensian house nor internal evidence addressing monastic reform. Furthermore, unlike Säben, there is no certainty they were even preached at the collegiate church of the Premonstratensians, but could have in fact been delivered to the parochial church.

circumstances surrounding their development. The first two sections detail how the bishop shifts from his emphasis on personal renewal of the individual religious to observant reform through submission to their authoritative rule. The subsequent two sections cover his incorporation of *christiformitas* language as a means of personal reform of the religious and his later employment of the idea in service of monastic reform. By way of conclusion, the chapter will summarize how all the strands of personal reform and monastic reform come together in the context of his broader notions of ecclesiology and reform against the backdrop of his struggles in Brixen.

1453 Monastic Visitation Sermons

Cusanus began visitation almost immediately upon entering his diocese, though in a more informal manner, by inspecting several houses to determine their compliance with the 1451 Salzburg decree, *Quoniam dignum*, which he had posted on the cathedral doors of Brixen his first week there. Between April and June, he visited Neustift, Sonnenburg, Wilten, and Stams, presumably deeming each non-compliant with Salzburg, which gave him warrant for attaining the 1453 bull *Inter cetera* from Nicholas V. He would take up visitation after returning from Rome, visiting Stams in June, the parochial churches Innsbruck and Bruneck in July and August respectively, before addressing the Benedictines at the Church of the Holy Cross at Säben, a monastery overlooking the village of Klausen, in September.[14] There he delivered a sermon to the monks at the abbey that sounds many of the notes resonant throughout his entire corpus. Preaching on the patron festival of the church, Holy Cross, his sermon is an expositional treatment of the gospel for day (John 12:31–36). He employs a series of binaries to differentiate those who belong to the world and those who are of the cross. The Christ who was elevated on

[14] Mutschlechner, "Itinerar," 528. He visited there four times, once early in his tenure in the fall of 1453, then three more times between summer of 1456 and summer of 1457, but only two sermons are extant.

the cross illuminates the intellect through his word, but those who are ignorant do not see the light and remain in darkness. While the former have heavenly truth, the latter have only earthly truth.[15] Later in the sermon, he complements these binaries with a new metaphor for personal renewal that will expand in conjunction with his broader notion of *christiformitas*: the Adam-Christ contrast. Many remain in darkness and are subject to condemnation, he argues, but not so for those who become sons of God. "Moreover Jesus declares himself to be the light and the 'light' of light to be faith and through faith is a 'son of the light' or 'heredity' attained, which the intellect walking [by it] seeks..."[16] Then commenting on John 12:36—that those who have the light and believe it become sons of God—he adds, "From this text consider that the 'crowd or world' itself should consider Christ as the light, since he is the true light. And there is no other work than to believe in him, that the 'sons of this world', the sons of the earthly Adam, the sons of 'darkness and ignorance', the sons of death, etc., might become 'sons of light,' of heavenly wisdom and eternal life."[17] He continues to describe the nature of ascent to paradise as one of a "supernatural, superadded strength" (*vis...supernaturalis superaddita*) that fights against nature.[18] Through this strength bestowed by Christ, one is able to enter glory. Finally, to attain to this Christ is to be exalted as he was on the cross, that is, above the earthly Adam: "It is necessary therefore to be elevated above the earthly nature of Adam, that you might ascend to heaven..."[19] In this early sermon to the Benedictines at Säben, there is nothing explicitly related to monastic

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[15] "Ego si exaltatus fuero," *Sermo* 133.4 (*ñ* XVIII: 60).

[16] "Ego si exaltatus fuero," *Sermo* 133.7, 14–17 (*ñ* XVIII: 62): "Declarat autem Jesus se lucem et 'lumen' lucis esse 'fidem', et per fidem attingi 'filiationem lucis' seu 'hereditatem', quam intellectus ambulando quaerit."

[17] "Ego si exaltatus fuero," *Sermo* 133.7, 20–26 (*ñ* XVIII: 62): "Ex quo textu habes, quod 'turba seu mundus' iste debet habere Christum pro luce, quia 'lux vera'. Et non est opus nisi credere in eum, ut 'filii hulus mundh, filii Adae terreni, filii 'tenebrarum et ignorantiae', filii mortis, etc., fiant 'filii lucis' caelestis sapientiae et vitae aeternae."

[18] "Ego si exaltatus fuero," *Sermo* 133.8, 7 (*ñ* XVIII: 63).

[19] "Ego si exaltatus fuero," *Sermo* 133.13, 8–10 (*ñ* XVIII: 65): "Opportet igitur elevari super terrenam naturam

reform. On the contrary, he addresses them as he would the laity in Brixen. His goal is their personal reform to the end of attaining eternal salvation—a goal he can only assume that they share.

This is the precise chord he strikes in his first visitation sermon at Neustift in October 1453.[20] Having returned to Brixen from Säben and undertaken brief visits to Sonnenburg (September 27) and Wilten (October 3), he visited Neustift for the second time since his arrival in the diocese, only now for the annual dedication of their Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary.[21] While there is little known about the Benedictines at Säben, the Augustinian canons differ markedly in that there remains a significant paper trail of Cusanus's relationship with them. He visited the Neustift abbey more than any other monastic house in the diocese and also preached to them more than to any other parish, collegiate or parochial, other than the Brixen cathedral. The canons themselves were partially conformed to the 1451 Salzburg decree, having agreed to reform their order in his first visit there on April 16, 1452.[22] The bishop had cordial relations with them during the early visits and developed a trusting relationship with both the prior, Kaspar von Aigner, and a deacon, Johannes Fuchs. The prior, whom he likely knew from their days together at the Council of Basel in 1433–34, served Cusanus as a visitor to the Wilten house and was later charged with reforming the Augustinian house in Gries in 1455.[23] The deacon

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Adae, ut ad calestam ascendas..."

[20] Hallauer "Nikolaus von Kues als Bischof," 280. Cusanus visited Neustift on April 16, 1452, his second week in Brixen, when he apparently dedicated a new altar and examined the liturgical books.

[21] On medieval dedication sermons, see Horie, *Perceptions of Ecclesia*, 1–12.

[22] Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 99.

[23] Herman J. Hallauer, "Nikolaus von Kues und das Chorherrenstift Neustift," in *Festschrift für Nikolaus Grass zum 60. Geburtstag dargebracht von Fachgenossen, Freunden und Schülern, Bd. 1: Abendländische und deutsche Rechtsgeschichte, Geschichte und Recht der Kirche, Geschichte und Recht Österreichs*, ed. Louis Carlen and Fritz Steinegger (Innsbruck: Wagner, 1974), 309–24, and Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 101.

Fuchs was part of a September 1453 visitation party to Sonnenburg and was also named reformer at Gries in 1455, along with his prior.[24]

After a fairly perfunctory reading of the gospel for the day (John 4:46–53), Cusanus begins an extended treatment of the word *domus* ("house"), a common medieval trope in dedication sermons.[25] Here he offers two parallel similes. The house is like unto a family as the church is to a body, each composed of different members.[26] Continuing the analogy, God dwells in the natural family through its essence, in the church through grace.[27] He then quickly changes the referent for the image from the house and church as edifices to the personal reform of the individual's soul as if it were a church writ small:

> Note concerning the two houses: One is yours individually, the other is communal, and is the church. And note that the first, in which you dwell, signifies the body, and you inhabit it as a soul in a body. The second house signifies the soul, and you dwell in it like God. The first house is the house of Adam, the second is of Christ. Therefore do that which might make your body what you desire to have for a house, so that the soul might inhabit the body like a house. And do that which makes your soul as a church, that God might inhabit the soul. "Your house of clay" from Adam, the "house of God" from God. God through his word built the earthly from the earthly and the heavenly from the heavenly.[28]

As Christ dwells in the church spiritually, so should each Christian understand the individual body to be the residence of the soul. He resurrects the Adam-Christ contrast to this end. The body comes from Adam and has a rational soul dwelling in it, that by the soul the body as a house might conform to the image of Christ, who dwells in the church and makes it holy:

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[24] Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 101.

[25] Horie, *Perceptions of Ecclesia*, 37.

[26] "Credit ipse," *Sermo* 134.6 (*h* XVIII: 67).

[27] "Credit ipse," *Sermo* 134.7 (*h* XVIII: 68).

[28] "Credit ipse," *Sermo* 134.8, 1–15 (*h* XVIII: 68): "Nota de duabus domibus: Una est tua particulas, alia est communis, et est ecclesia. Et nota, quod prima, in qua tu habitas significat corpus, et tu inhabitator es ut anima in corpore. Secunda domus significat animam, et tu inhabitator ut Deus. Prima domus est domus Adae, secunda est Christi. Fac igitur, quod corpus habeas prout velles habere domum, et quod anima inhabitet corpus prout tu domum. Et fac, quod animam habeas ut ecclesiam, ut Deus inhabitet animam. 'Domus tua lutea' etc., ex Adam, 'domus Dei' ex Deo. Deus per verbum suum de terra aedificavit domum terrenam et de caelo caelestem."

"Whoever desires that God dwell daily in his soul, modifies the soul for the dwelling of God, that he might be a church. The church is built without stain or wrinkle and is sanctified."[29] As is common for medieval dedication sermons, the church in this context does not take an ecclesiastical referent, but rather a spiritual referent.[30] The church is a house indwelt by God as the believer is indwelt by his soul. Thus, the personal reform of the Christian follows the pattern established within the spiritual body of the church, where the individual conforms his life through active obedience. The Adam-Christ motif enables Cusanus to ferret out the human nature of both the individual and the church, born of Adam, from the spiritual soul of both the individual and of the church, born of Christ. The latter is the agent for reform of the former.

These first short visitation sermons reflect many of the same themes. In both cases, Cusanus places the accent on spiritual renewal by resorting to a series of dualisms—light and darkness, the intellect and ignorance, heavenly truth and earthly truth, church and house, soul and body, Adam and Christ. The last appears in both sermons and represents a prominent reform image that undergirds his notion of personal, spiritual renewal as an imitation of the heavenly Christ. These earliest sermons, however, noticeably lack any direct reference to monastic reform, or for that matter anything relative to the audience itself. At this stage in the bishop's monastic reform efforts, he has yet to deal with stiff resistance. He is left to assume that, despite various levels of unwillingness to comply with the 1451 Salzburg decree, the religious essentially share his goal of attaining salvation through the *vita contemplativa*, even where they disagree on the shape that it would take in terms of religious observance or submission to episcopal jurisdiction or even reform induced by Rome.

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[29] "Credit ipse," *Sermo* 134.9, 8–12 (*h* XVIII: 69): "Qui vult, quod Deus diu maneat in anima, adaptat animam pro habitaculo Dei, ut sit ecclesia. Ecclesia est aedificata sine coquina et cellari et sanctificata."

[30] Horie, *Perceptions of Ecclesia*, 95.

1454 Monastic Visitation Sermons

The halcyon early days of the Brixen episcopacy soon gave way to ongoing battles for reform of religious houses in the diocese. The course of that reform winds its way through Sonnenburg, both literally and figuratively. In the period between his sermon at Neustift and his next sermon to the religious, Cusanus visits the Sonnenburg abbey on November 29, 1453 with a group that included Tegernsee prior Bernhard von Waging. It is after this visit that Waging in a notable letter expressed astonishment that the Benedictine nuns there neither lived according to their rule nor cared to do so. His solution to the quandary was to recruit nuns from an observant convent, which predictably the Sonnenburg nuns contested.[31] Against this backdrop, Cusanus begins his more extensive visitation of the diocesan religious orders with the aim of reforming them in accordance with *Inter cetera*, the bull proclaimed a few months earlier. One of the houses cited in the bull was the Poor Clares of Brixen.[32] They in many respects were the mirror image of Sonnenburg. Religious observance among the Poor Clares had become a repeated problem throughout the order. The Clares as a convent were bound to a strict interpretation of their rule, but according to Hallauer had developed a "lax interpretation " by the first half of the fifteenth century.[33] Exempt from episcopal jurisdiction, they proved resistant to visitation and reform efforts.[34] With *Inter cetera*, Cusanus now had papal authority to reform the house in Brixen. Complicating matters, however, was the relationship between the convent and local nobility. Like Sonnenburg, the Clares were a refuge for the unmarried daughters of the nobility,

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[31] Meuthen, *Nicholas of Cusa*, 121.

[32] The account of the visitation and reform of the Clares is found in Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 121–24, and Hallauer, "Brixener Klarissenkloster," 75–123.

[33] Hallauer, "Brixener Klarissenkloster," 76–77.

[34] Hallauer, "Brixener Klarissenkloster," 76. On the complications of exemption for visitation, see Cheyney, *Episcopal Visitation*, 40.

who provided financial patronage to the houses but were largely uninterested in forcing the women to live a strict religious life.[35] One of the Clares, Maria von Wolkenstein, was the daughter of the prominent Wolkenstein family, and she repeatedly opposed Cusanus's reform overtures.[36] He first visited the convent in January 1454, but to no avail. As was his practice, he later sought outside help in reforming the convent from other Franciscans, this time Albert Büchelbach of the Nuremberg cloister and Johannes de Lare of the Strasbourg observants.[37] He named Büchelbach visitor in April 1455, who suggested removing the abbess and certain nuns who were of noble stock and replacing them with reformed sisters.[38] Finally, in the summer of 1455—this time under express directive of the new pope, Calixtus III—the convent was brought to reform without resistance.[39] It was placed under the auspices of Strasbourg observants and several nuns were brought in from the reformed house in Nuremberg, including a new abbess.[40] The next year, Lare published new statutes for the convent that stipulated strict observance.[41] In response to their reform, Duke Sigismund summarily evicted them from their house.[42]

Cusanus, of course, could not have envisioned this course of events when he first addressed the Clares. His first and only sermon delivered at the convent, in his visitation of January 12, 1454, takes a different direction than his earlier homilies in Säben and Neustift. The text he chooses is the epistle for the Conversion of St. Paul (Acts 9:1–21), which proves fortuitous for

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[35] Pavlac, "Reform," 87.

[36] Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 122.

[37] Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 120.

[38] Hallauer, "Brixener Klarissenkloster," 85.

[39] Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 123.

[40] Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 124, and Meuthen, *Nicholas of Cusa*, 120.

[41] Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 124.

[42] Hallauer, "Brixener Klarissenkloster," 92.

his vision of reform. The short sermon divides neatly into three sections. First, he introduces the text—Ananias announcing his presence to Paul and the scales falling from the latter's eyes—and then applies it to the religious life as the "vocation of a zealous soul."[43] This zeal, he says, relates to both positive law and spiritual law. As Paul in his ignorance of the spiritual law persecuted the church from his zeal for the positive law, so when the scales fell he saw spiritual things rightly. "'Scales' are like the opaque darkness generated by habit (*consuetudine*)."[44] This then enables him to introduce the *propositio* for his visitation: the bishop himself is Ananias sent to the Clares, who are a "blind, zealous sister" like Paul. He appears to her on the way (*via*) while she is yet of the world that she might come out of the world. "For your rule is not holy unless there is the appearance of Jesus 'on the way.' But since you have not attained to the spirit of the rule, having been impaired by blindness, so 'should you be led by the hand' to the 'city,' where you might be told 'what is necessary for you to do'."[45]

Using again his standard contrast of darkness and blindness in opposition to truth, Cusanus urges the Clares to attend to their vocation, which is obedience to the rule. First, if they are to see as Paul did on the road to Damascus, then they must destroy the "perverse habits...which interpret the rule wickedly," that God might fill them with the Holy Spirit as he did the apostle.[46] Drawing on analogies of the religious as a bride seeking the bridegroom, Jesus, and a

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[43] "Dominus Jesus misit me," *Sermo* 142.1 (*h* XVIII: 98).

[44] "Dominus Jesus misit me," *Sermo* 142.2, 16–17 (*h* XVIII: 98): "'Squamae' sunt quasi opacae tenebrae generatae ex consuetudine."

[45] "Dominus Jesus misit me," *Sermo* 142.3, 6–10 (*h* XVIII: 99): "Nam non est regula sancta vestra, nisi apparitio Jesu 'in via'. Sed quia usque ad spiritum regulae non pervenisti, percussa es caecitate, ut sic 'manuducaris' ad 'civitatem', ubi dicatur tibi, 'quid te oporteat facere'."

[46] "Dominus Jesus misit me," *Sermo* 142.4, 1–5 (*h* XVIII: 99): "Et primo oportet, 'ut videas'. Et hoc non potest esse, nisi 'squamae cadant de oculis' et tollantur pravae consuetudines male regulam interpretantes. Quo facto lavaberis et 'impleberis Spiritu Sancto,' etc."

philosopher seeking wisdom by the rules of the ancients, he then speaks of the Clares pursuing their bridegroom through the rule established for them:

> But to you, Clares, is given a rule, in which is the way to the bridegroom Jesus, who is "Wisdom", and you should obtain him through it. And he desires that it be obtained in that way by you and not through another [way]. For in this law, which you receive in faith, he betrothed you. Then after you place yourselves on the path and "you who have put hand to the plow, if you look back again, you are not fit for the kingdom of heaven," for there is no kingdom apart from apprehending the beloved groom.[47]

The observant reform of their house is a question of their salvation. The reform of the Clares requires conformity to the rule given for their salvation, but they will only attain salvation when the scales that contort the rule fall from their eyes.

It is this basic construction of the rule as a means to salvation that Cusanus employs in his second visit to—and first official visitation of—Neustift later that year on 11 December.[48] Unlike the Clares, there were no apparent conflicts either during or after the visitation, as evidenced by the use of Aigner and Fuchs as reformers of the Gries house, nor was there any reason to suspect tension at this stage with the canons. He had earlier that year invited them to join him in Brixen for a feast on Palm Sunday, and he also established friendly relations between Neustift and the Benedictines at Tegernsee, who each had representatives at the Sonnenburg visitation.[49] The next year Cusanus would even solicit assistance from Aigner to join in the visitation of the Wilten Premonstratensians and to examine the liturgical books for the clergy at Eisackstal.[50] All this implies that the bishop remained in cordial relations with the canons there and had little cause to

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[47] "Dominus Jesus misit me," *Sermo* 142.6, 1–9 (*h* XVIII: 99): "Sed vobis Clarissis data est regula, in qua est via ad sponsum Jesum, qui est 'Sapientia, et ipsum per iliam reperietis. Et vult in ilia via per vos et non pet aliam reperiri. Nam in hac lege, quam fide recepistis, desponsavit vos. Unde postquam posuistis vos in itinere et 'misistis manum ad aratrum, si retro respicitis, non eritis aptae regno caelorum', quod regnum non est, nisi apprehendere sponsum amatum etc."

[48] Watanabe, *Concord and Reform*, 142.

[49] Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 101.

[50] Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 109.

reproach them with the same apparent sternness he did the Poor Clares of Brixen. That is precisely, however, what the bishop does. He begins this visitation sermon with an exhortation from the epistle (Romans 15:4), presumably read at the previous Sunday's mass. As Paul tells the church that her patient expectation of salvation is produced by the Holy Spirit, so too is the suffering of a reform amongst the religious a sure sign of that same Spirit:

> I want to turn the sermon to you. So if it is that you have a true hope of attaining eternal life through the rule, you will most patiently suffer all things which are of the rule of life, and whatever is added for a better observance through the one who presents it to you and seeks your salvation, that if there is a firm hope in you of future glory, to which you ascend that "are not worthy of the sufferings of this world," then there is in you the spirit of God, and therefore you will follow that which is of hope, since a "hope" which is in God "does not confound." If you have hope for a future life, then you are not free from flesh or blood or sensible or animal life, which are the things of this world that pass and go by in its form and its lusts so that you might live in hope.[51]

Hope enables the monk to endure reform because he knows it will eventuate in the salvation of his soul. This sort of hope is incorruptible precisely because it hopes for that which it does not have. Using a line of thought he will exploit later in connection with *christiformitas* as a means of attaining filiation, or theosis, he explains this in the context of expectant sons of God. They are not yet sons, but Christ is "hidden" in them through vivifying grace. As they "apprehend" and "delight" in God by feeding on the hope given them in the Scriptures, they will become the sons of God they hope to be.[52]

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[51] "Quaecumque scripta sunt, ad nostram doctrinam scripta sunt," *Sermo* 166.2, 1–16 (*ñ* XVIII: 213): "Volo ad vos sermonem convertere. Si ita est quod veram spem habetis per regularem vitam attingere aeternam, patientissime omnia suffertis quae regularis vitae sunt, et quaecumque pro meliori observantia regulae adduntur per illum qui vobis praeest et vestram salutem quaerit quod si in vobis est spes firma futurae gloriae, ad quam assequendam 'non sunt condignae passiones huius mundi', tunc in vobis est spiritus Dei, et propterea assequimini id quod speratis quia 'spes', quae in Deo est 'non confundit'. Si spem habetis futurae vitae, tunc non vacabitis carni nec sanguini nec vitae animali vel sensibili quae omnia sunt huius mundi qui transibit et praeteriet in forma et concupiscentiis eius quia ut speratis vivetis."

[52] "Quaecumque scripta sunt, ad nostram doctrinam scripta sunt," *Sermo* 166.4 (*ñ* XVIII: 214).

Having laid the salvific framework for his reform, he then addresses the religious in order to ascertain whether or not the Spirit who produces hope is evident among them. If they indeed "keep the mandates and the ordinances with a cheerful heart" and "tolerate everything with a patient joy because of a future expectation," then he is convinced the Spirit leads them. "For if you keep everything patiently and with a cheerful heart without murmuring, I rejoice that you have the good spirit who leads you to hope."[53] If not, they have "wasted" both his work and theirs, and should they not produce the necessary fruits in this third year under his episcopal care, then he "will side with the parable of the fig tree."[54] He then divides the religious into two distinct populations: the "false" (*ficto*) religious and the "true" (*verus*). The false enter the monastery not in the hope of salvation, but through rote obedience to basic forms of diet and dress. The true religious, on the other hand, enter the monastery to do penance.[55] The telltale is obedience:

> All things for the false are grave; all things for the true are easy. Therefore it will be easy for me to find out who might be true and who might be false, for obedience shows [it]. The true desire most painstakingly to obey no less than the greatest of the commandments of God, and that he might be like a beast of burden that is loaded who never says "it is sufficient" as long as has not met his death under the load.[56]

The one who has the hope of salvation bears with the religious life, even pursues it, because he knows the hope it entails; the other runs from its demands because he does not have the hope of

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[53] "Quaecumque scripta sunt, ad nostram doctrinam scripta sunt," *Sermo* 166.5, 7–10 (*ñ* XVIII: 214): "Nam si patienter et laeto animo omnia servatis sine murmuratione, spiritum bonum vos habere qui vos ducet ad sperata, gaudebo."

[54] "Quaecumque scripta sunt, ad nostram doctrinam scripta sunt," *Sermo* 166.5, 10–13 (*ñ* XVIII: 214): "Si non, dolebo multum me perdidisse diligentiam et vos labores; et si repperero aliquos non facere fructum in hoc tertio anno, sequar doctrinam evangelii de ficulnea."

[55] "Quaecumque scripta sunt, ad nostram doctrinam scripta sunt," *Sermo* 166.6, 9–11 (*ñ* XVIII: 215): "Verus religiosus intrat monasterium ne decipiatur et poenitentiam agat. Ficto omnia sunt gravia, vero omnia levia."

[56] "Quaecumque scripta sunt, ad nostram doctrinam scripta sunt," *Sermo* 166.6, 11–16 (*ñ* XVIII: 215): "Erit igitur facile mihi experiri qui veri sint et qui ficti. Nam oboedientia ostendet. Verus accuratissime studet non minus superiorum quam Dei oboedire mandatis, et fit tamquam iumentum quod oneratur nec dicit 'sufficit' quamdiu sub onere non occumbit."

salvation produced by the Spirit. As his later discussion of *corpus mysticum* will show, the monastery like the church is a *corpus permixtum*.

The parallels between the visitation sermon to the Clares and the visitation sermon to the Neustift Augustinians are striking. For both, the goal is reform of the rule. The rule, however, is not an end, but a means. It was given for the salvation of those who submit to it. A house that does not keep its rule has forgotten the very reason the rule was instituted in the first place. This was precisely the problem with the Brixen Clares, a convent which serves the purpose of keeping unmarried daughters, such as Maria von Wolkenstein, deposited there by wealthy nobles who offer their financial patronage in kind. Yet at the same time it did not apply to Neustift, where reform came slowly but surely, and whose prior remained on good terms with the bishop. One plausible catalyst for this shift toward preaching a more strict observant reform of the religious, in contrast to his earlier personal reform, may have been the visitation of Sonnenburg in late 1453. Having received the imprimatur for his reform of recalcitrant religious orders in his diocese, it is in the wake of the November 1453 visit to Sonnenburg that Cusanus becomes aware of the indifference toward observant reform amongst those Benedictine nuns who will remain a source of opposition. Moreover, in April 1454 his visit of the Benedictine abbey at St. Georgenberg would result in the first outright failure of his reform agenda, this time when an obstinate abbot rejected the proposals of two visitors from their fellow Benedictine house in Tegernsee.[57] Given the opposition to reform, it stands to reason that the monastic visitation sermons would reflect a change in tenor.

Such a strict demand for observance plays well into the picture of Nicholas as a strict hierarchicalist dictating reform under auspices of a papal bull. The relationship between

[57] Watanabe, *Concord and Reform*, 138.

obedience to the rule and attainment of salvation is crucial to understanding the reform ideas undergirding his sermons. He steadfastly believed in the salvific end of the monastic rule and that drove his reform of the religious. Nor was this idea reserved for the religious. At this point in his Brixen tenure, Cusanus used the same image broadly elsewhere to define both the secular clergy and the laity. In an Invocavit sermon delivered two months after the visit to Neusfit, he placed all reform under the rubric of personal renewal (*renascentia seu renovatio interiorios hominis*), which comes through the washing of the sacrament (*per lotionem...in sacramento*).[58] In this sense, all subordinates within the ecclesiastical hierarchy serve the greater end of salvation. Benedictines follow the rule of Benedict, Franciscans the rule of Francis, the canons regular their rule, even bishops that of the pope, as an "instrument of the Lord" to the end of attaining charity and penance.[59] He will make the same point in an infamous sermon preached during a visit of the Brixen parochial church in July 1455. The bishop there speaks of his responsibility to care for the vineyard and how the militant church under his care should "be conformed to the [church] triumphant."[60] The role of the visitor, then, is to inspect the faith of the people, that they might follow their exemplar Jesus to the end of "the kingdom of heaven or the fellowship of the city of the supernal" (*ad regnum caelorum seu societatem civium supernorum*).[61] Obedience, for Cusanus, marks this path of conformity to the image of the heavenly church for the purpose of attaining eternal felicity, but this path is shaped by one's estate. He then uses the medieval

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[58] "Non in solo pane vivit homo," *Sermo* 174.9, 20–22 (*h* XVIII: 266): "Oportet igitur renovari mente et spiritu et renasci. Et haec renascentia seu renovatio interioris hominis fit fide per lotionem exterioris hominis in sacramento."

[59] "Non in solo pane vivit homo," *Sermo* 174. 10–11 (*h* XVIII: 267).

[60] "Respice de caelo et vide et visita vineam istam," *Sermo* 196.2, 13–15 (*h* XVIII: 409): "Nam oportet nos militantem ecclesiam, quantum possibile est, colere, ut conformetur triumphanti."

[61] "Respice de caelo et vide et visita vineam istam," *Sermo* 196.4, 4–5 (*h* XVIII: 409): "Solum autem caelestes cives veram adipiscuntur felicitatem. Via igitur, qua Iesus Christus nos praecessit, cuius sequelam seu religionem professi sumus, nos ducit ad regnum caelorum seu societatem civium supernorum."

counsels of perfection to describe how the three respective estates—monastic, clerical, lay—are characterized by their commitment to the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. All, however, pledge themselves to obedience.[62] He will even contend in the sermon that "irrational obedience is the consummate and most perfect obedience (*oboedientia igitur irrationalis est consummata oboedientia et perfectissima*)."[63] There is little doubt that at this stage Cusanus equates salvation with obedience according to one's estate, which in turn would explain his insistence upon the monastic submission to the rule of their order. They are not merely rejecting his reform initiative; they are to his mind rejecting the salvation available to them through the rule. Furthermore, the intensely pious and austere bishop could not comprehend the motivation for taking religious vows if not to seek salvation in the solace of the *vita contemplativa*—as he himself desired to do upon retirement.[64] There is less reason, however, to think that he has made an explicit connection yet between this salvific obedience and *christiformitas*, even if he suggests the way forward in his conclusion to this sermon by citing Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* on the necessity of imitating the character of Christ.[65] That connection, at this assuredly disappointing and confounding time in Cusanus's episcopacy, remains in the offing.

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[62] "Respice de caelo et vide et visita vineam istam," *Sermo* 196.10, 1–10 (*h* XVIII: 413). "Est autem in religione christiana triplex status. Nam est laicorum tantum aut clericorum aut monachorum. In omni tamen religione necesse est quod sub oboedientia vita peragatur. Nam Christus magister noster factus est oboediens Patri, quando dixit: 'Non sicut ego volo, sed sicut tu', et 'usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis'. Ita omnes necesse est esse oboedientes. Sed maior debet esse oboedientia in statu clericali, adhuc maior in monachali."

[63] "Respice de caelo et vide et visita vineam istam," *Sermo* 196.12, 21–23 (*h* XVIII: 415). For the incredulous responses to this claim, see the literature cited in chapter three, n. 136.

[64] It is also no coincidence that as early as summer 1454 Cusanus begins contemplating his resignation as bishop of Brixen. On this, see Pastor, *History of the Popes*, 3:182, and Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 331.

[65] "Respice de caelo et vide et visita vineam istam," *Sermo* 196.17, 1–4 (*h* XVIII: 418): "Debet christianus imitari Christum. Nam, ut Augustinus in De doctrina christiana, christianus nemo recte dicitur, nisi qui Christi moribus coaequatur."

1455 Monastic Visitation Sermons

The transition toward a more Dionysian-hierarchical *christiform* concept of monastic reform slowly surfaces in a pair of sermons Cusanus preaches to the Neustift canons in late summer and early fall of 1455. These were not official monastic visitations, but rather less formal preaching appointments: the first on the festival day of their rule's founder, St. Augustine, and the second for the annual festival of dedication, as he had in 1453. Like the earlier *Sermo* 134, the fact that he was not undertaking a visitation, with all its attendant procedures and tensions, allows for a less confrontational, even more devotional tone. The first of these two sermons, preached August 28, 1455, is most striking for its lack of attention to the rule or reform. While one could attribute this omission to the nature of the occasion, how he frames personal reform as a means of attaining salvation and the exemplars he employs to that end merit attention. Gone is the goal of obedience to the rule; replacing it is conformity to an exemplar. Due to the feast day, Cusanus begins with the famous account of Augustine's conversion, where hearing the words "*tolle, lege*" he opened the Scriptures, read the promises there, and saved his soul.[66] He continues by recalling Bonaventure's claim that Augustine was a "son of Paul." If Augustine achieved perfection through Paul, and Paul obtained his apostolate from Christ, then "father Augustine has been made an exemplar for us of how we might attain perfection." He goes on: "If all consummate knowledge of attaining to felicity, which is desired by all, is 'to know Christ and him crucified,' and to know this is to put him on, therefore for we who desire to be sons of father Augustine, it will be necessary to follow his doctrine, indeed 'to put on Christ'."[67] Christ is the exemplar of exemplars. The pilgrims should not stop at imitating Paul or

[66] "Induimini Dominum Iesum Christum," *Sermo* 201.1 (*h* XVIII: 441).

[67] "Induimini Dominum Iesum Christum," *Sermo* 201.2, 12–17 (*h* XVIII: 441): "Si omnis consummata scientia pertingendi ad felicitatem, quae ab omnibus appetitur, est 'scire Christum et hunc crucifixum', et hoc scire est induere ipsum, igitur qui filii patris Augustini esse volumus, hanc eius sequi doctrinam necesse erit, scilicet 'induere

Augustine, but through Paul and Augustine imitate Christ. Furthermore, the fact that he intones perfection—a *Stichwort* in the Dionysian hierarchies—also hints at possible influences and trajectories.

This raises another favorite image of his for personal reform: Paul's exhortation to put on Christ, which Cusanus draws from the epistle for the day (Romans 13:14). Putting on Christ has its logical corollary in putting off the flesh. He uses the hypostatic union, a point of emphasis throughout his sermons, to detail how the rational soul of the Christian guides the body in this process.[68] Christ, he says, employed the flesh "as an instrument" through which he "illuminated" and "liberated" the faithful. Therefore, he used the flesh to that end, not as an end in itself, and was even willing to suffer in it. Likewise, the Christian should not hesitate to suffer in the flesh if it means putting off the desire for sin. The soul is the "end of the flesh" and therefore one should use the flesh as an "instrument," not as an end in itself.[69] Putting off the desires of the flesh is an imitation of Christ himself and that imitation is necessary for all Christians—all those who are *christiform*.[70] He further explains how the *christiform* imitate Christ through "perfect obedience." Recalling his understanding of the *complicatio-explicatio* dialectic, where all virtues are enfolded in Christ and unfolded from him, perfect obedience does not merely imply imitation of certain virtues, but the imitation of Jesus as the maximal source of virtue or the "Lord of virtue...without which there is no perfect virtue."[71] This relationship of perfect obedience to imitation again underscores Dionysian influence.

Iesum Christum'."

[68] On the hypostatic union in the sermons, see Euler, "Proclamation of Christ," 98–100.

[69] "Induimini Dominum Iesum Christum," *Sermo* 201.3 (*h* XVIII: 442).

[70] For the role of *christiformitas* in this sermon with relation to Cusanus's larger notion of conformity to Christ, see Schwaetzer, "La conformation au Christ," 126–30.

[71] "Induimini Dominum Iesum Christum," *Sermo* 201.4 (*h* XVIII: 442). On the notion of all virtues being enfolded in Christ, see chapter three, n. 93.

He then connects the discussion of putting on Christ with *christiformitas* by using the term adjectivally to describe works, not substantively to describe the one who does them. The *christiform* soul is the one whose rational soul puts off the flesh through *christiform* works that imitate the exemplar, Christ, to the end of attaining salvation:

> The rational soul, which puts on *christiform* obedience, deserves to be exalted unto the glory of eternal blessedness. Elsewhere Paul commands us to take off the old man and put on the new. The old man is Adam, "the earthly from earth"; the new is Christ, "the heavenly from heaven." What is Adam unless disobedient, what is Christ unless obedient? The flesh, which ought to obey the righteous order by the Spirit, is dominated in Adam to the death of the spirit. But obedience of the flesh is repaired in the new man, since the flesh obeys the spirit even to death.[72]

Here he draws together several lines of thought from his earlier reform sermons and places them in the disposal of the imitation of Christ. First, imitating Christ through *christiform*, or perfect, works of obedience obtains eternal blessedness, as the rule was previously the means for attaining salvation for the canons. Second, the contrast between putting off the desires of the flesh and putting on Christ has its parallel in the contrast between Adam as old man and Christ as new man, just as Cusanus's earliest visitation sermons had described the personal reform of the religious. Finally, perfect obedience as the imitation of Christ through putting off the old flesh, or Adam, is achieved through the subjugation of flesh by the spirit, even to the end of death—an image taken from Philippians 2 that will give christological, Dionysian shape to the definition of obedience. This new conflation of renewal metaphors means that Nicholas can now use salvation as an impetus to personal reform of the religious as Christians, not merely as the religious in slavish conformity to their rule.

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[72] "Induimini Dominum Iesum Christum," *Sermo* 201.4, 28–39 (*h* XVIII: 443): "Anima rationalis, quae christiformem oboedientiam induit, illa meretur exaltari usque ad gloriam aeternae felicitatis. Iubet alibi Paulus exuere nos veterem hominem et induere novum. Vetus homo est Adam 'de terra terrenus', novus est Christus 'de caelo caelestis'. Quid est Adam nisi inoboedientia, quid Christus nisi oboedientia? Caro, quae debuit iusto ordine oboedire spiritui, dominatur in Adam usque admortem spiritus. Sed reparatur oboedientia carnis in novo homine, quia caro oboedit spiritui usque ad mortem."

The identical dynamic takes place in the short sermon he preaches at Neustift two months later, this time for the annual dedication in October. The text is another traditional dedicatory epistle, Revelation 21, with the New Jerusalem descending from heaven.[73] After describing the New Jerusalem in terms more elegiac than apocalyptic, he makes comment on Revelation 21:4—"since the former things have passed away" (*quoniam priora transierunt*). Against these former things he sets the passage to the new life. It is necessary, he says, that such things pass away if the heavenly reward is to be attained (*perveniatur*). Then he distinguishes between a first death, when the Christian is "transferred from the transitory to the city composed from incorruptible things," and a second death, where those without faith are cast into the lake of fire.[74] The *christiform* face the former death, not the latter: "The *christiformes* go from temporal death to eternal life. The anti-Christians go from temporal death to eternal death. In the city where God dwells with men is the font of life. And 'whoever overcomes will possess this.' Thus no one is able to attain to the font of life, unless he overcomes and wins."[75] There are several important themes in Cusanus's dedication sermon that connect it with the preceding visitation sermon and suggest the direction his ensuing sermons will take. Like its predecessor, this sermon uses *christiformitas* as an image of personal reform primarily directed at the religious *qua* Christians, not properly as the religious. Furthermore, rather than painting their personal reform in the strictly moral terms of obedience, he presents it as an apocalyptic conflict between the

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[73] Horie, *Perceptions of Ecclesia*, 42.

[74] "Qui vicerit, possidebit haec," *Sermo* 205.2, 1–12 (*fi* XIX: 9): "Et nota, quia dicit 'quoniam priora transierunt'. Oportet priora transire, antequam ad illam caelestem perveniatur mansionem. 'Transit' enim 'mundus et concupiscentia eius'. Et illa est prima mors, quando morimur, scilicet de transitoriis transeundo ad civitatem de incorruptibilibus compositam, uti sunt aurum et gemmae et lux et situs ultra regionem corruptibilium. Deinde est mors secunda in stagno, in quod proiciuntur, qui fidem non habent, ut ibidem Iohannes in Apocalypsi."

[75] "Qui vicerit, possidebit haec," *Sermo* 205.2, 11–19 (*fi* XIX: 9): "Vadunt christiformes de morte temporali ad vitam aeternam. Vadunt antiehristiani de morte temporali ad mortem aeternam. In civitate, ubi Deus habitat eum hominibus, est fons vitae. Et 'qui vicerit, possidebit haec.' Unde ad fontem vitae non potest quisquam pervenire, nisi vincat et lucretur."

christiform pilgrims seeking heaven and the forces of the devil militating against them in the temporal realm. The militant church takes on an eschatological character as the object of apocalyptic battle with the devil. This evokes another favorite Cusan text, the white stone in Revelation 21:7, which emphasizes the eschatological reward that one cannot fully comprehend until attaining it in heaven, yet still serves as a goal for the *christiform* here below.[76] *Christiformitas* in this context becomes a heavenly image of reform, where its referent is the eschatological attainment of blessedness. While the goal of salvation according to the rule had been a means for monastic reform earlier, now he addresses the monks as Christians seeking the same salvific goal as the other estates, namely, translation from the earthly city to the heavenly city, or from the church militant to the church triumphant.

The concept of *christiformitas* only increases from this period in Cusanus's sermons. Before these two sermons delivered at Neustift, he had only used *christiformitas* in ten of his preceding 75 sermons following his arrival in Brixen. By contrast, 31 of his remaining 88 sermons will conscript it, then three of his four visitation sermons in Rome in early 1459.[77] Unfortunately for the bishop, its usefulness for reform is limited at the same time. The year 1456, which arrives shortly after these two Neustift sermons, brings his greatest ecclesiastical difficulties at Brixen. While the Clares finally accept peaceful reform, relations with others deteriorate, especially Neustift. The planned visitation of early 1456 is contested by the canons and results in a yearlong conflict with the priory that includes Kaspar von Aigner's excommunication. The consequent tensions throughout the diocese led to a protracted absence from visitation of parochial churches and monastic houses under Cusanus's care. Between his

[76] Cusanus applies this in particular to the apostolates of Peter and Paul in an earlier sermon, where neither apostle is fully cognizant of the full meaning implied by the name, "Tu es Petrus," *Sermo* 126.13 (*fi* XIX: 27).

[77] For a general statistical summary, see Schwaetzer, "La conformation au Christ," 121.

last visit to Neustift in October 1455 and the resumption of official visitation there in March 1457, he preaches only one visitation sermon at the parochial church in Brunneck, one sermon in visitation of Säben, and two sermons at Neustift—though only at new pope Calixtus III's request—in celebration of the victory over the Turks. The peripatetic reformer's itinerary during this eighteen-month stretch includes only twelve visits outside the diocesan seat in Brixen, paling in comparison to the roughly thirty recorded visits over the preceding eighteen months.[78] As a consequence, Cusanus has limited opportunities to ply *christiformitas* in the service of monastic reform and instead must develop it further amongst his cathedral constituents.

The lone exception is his visit to the Säben Benedictines on Holy Cross, September 14, 1456—the same occasion as his sermon delivered there in 1453.[79] The sermon itself departs from his treatment of the festival three years earlier. Whereas in 1453, he undertakes an expositional treatment of the gospel for the day, he bases this sermon on the gradual for Holy Cross from the Roman breviary: "Crucifixus resurrexit."[80] Some of the same themes arise—understanding and ignorance, darkness and light, Adam and Christ—but they are subordinate to a larger goal. The crucified Jesus now becomes the exemplar of personal reform and the object of imitation in order to attain salvific union with him. To this end, Cusanus brackets the sermon with two extensive discussions of *christiformitas*. The crucifixion relates to an exceedingly important contrast between the interior man and the exterior man:

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[78] Mutschlechner, "Itinerar," 528–531.

[79] What makes this visit all the more unusual is that between his first trip to Säben in September of 1453 and August of 1456, there is no record of another visit there. Yet Cusanus makes three more trips in the next year, including the Holy Cross visitation and a six-day retreat following the supposed threat on his life at Wilten the following year, which proved to be his last extended stay outside the Castle Andraz in Buchenstein for the remainder of his Brixen residency. Mutschlechner, "Itinerar," 530–31.

[80] "Crucifixus resurrexit," *Sermo* 245 (*h* XIX: 274–78). The apparatus of the critical edition cites the source as the Commemoration for the Cross for Lauds on Sundays in Paschal time, which reads: "Crucifixus surrexit a mortuis, et redemit nos, alleluja, alleluja."

> How much should we attend to the different powers in us, one in the flesh and the other in the spirit, which battle against each other, and that subversion of virtue, which rules in the flesh, is the crucifixion by which the virtue which rules in the rational soul overcomes, so we understand the mystery of the cross as that which we ought to do. Paul wrote about the crucifixion of the flesh and the old man and the world in the letters to the Galatians and the Romans, teaching how the exterior man or old man should be affixed to the cross through the new, interior, *christiform* man, and there his whole life, which is called concupiscence, should be killed that the new interior and heavenly man alone might live, who is just and true according to God. Such a man, though dead according to the flesh, also rises in that power, by which Christ the crucified rose from the dead.[81]

As in the earlier *christiformitas* sermon preached at Neustift, where the rational soul of the Christian is the means by which one puts off the flesh and puts on Christ, so now he equates the rational soul with the interior man as the means by which the Christian embodies virtue. Yet also in the same way as perfect obedience for the earlier sermon had little to do with specific works and more to do with a personal imitation of Christ, so for this sermon is *christiformitas* attributed to the one who crucifies the flesh.

After a series of familiar metaphors for this inner man/outer man dualism (invisible/visible, heavenly/worldly, understanding/ignorance, light/darkness, Adam/Christ), Cusanus resumes the discussion of imitating Christ through a crucifixion of the flesh. This *christiform* crucifixion of the flesh necessitates works. Using imitation language again (*imitari debitus*), he argues that if Christ subjected himself to death out of his mercy for all, then the Christian should imitate his exemplar in deeds of mercy toward all.[82] He then urges them to fear judgment for failing to

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[81] "Crucifixus resurrexit," *Sermo* 245.2, 1–17 (*h* XIX: 275): "Quando attendimus in nobis esse imperia diversa, unum in carne et aliud in spiritu, quae contra se militant, et quod subactio virtutis, qua ein carne imperat, est crucifixio vincente virtute, quae in rationali anima imperat, tunc mysterium crucifixionis quoad ea, quae facere debemus intelligimus. Paulus de crucifixione carnis et ve teris hominis et mundi scripsit in epistulis ad Galatas et Romanos, docens quo modo homo exterior seu vetus homo debet per interiorem novum hominem christiformem affigi cruci, et ibi interfici debet omnis eius vita, quae concupiscentia dicitur, ut solum vivat novus interior et caelestis homo, qui secundum Deum est iustus et verax. Talis homo sic secundum carnem mortuus in virtute illa, qua Christus crucifixus mortuus resurrexit, etiam resurget."

[82] "Crucifixus resurrexit," *Sermo* 245.10 (*h* XIX: 277).

crucify the flesh.[83] As the cross was first raised in Säben "to drive out a demon," so now should "Christ the crucified" be their "life" and "light" and the "form" of their life."[84] Christ as the "form" of one's life segues again into *christiformitas*:

> Piety and mercy reveal us [to be] *christiform* and sons of God, since we have him before us, by whose spirit we are moved; those who receive him he makes sons of God, those who are mortified in the flesh he makes to rise in the spirit to be seated with him in the glory of God the Father. But if we do not have Christ the crucified effectively in us, whom we imitate by act and deed, we should repent and ask the good spirit, since he will not deny giving the spirit of life to those who ask, for whom he died voluntarily and willingly, even as he lives.[85]

The internal *chrisiformitas* of the Christian will and must express itself with the external imitation of Christ in deed. He connects it with filiation, where the sons of God imitate their exemplar Jesus that they might reach the heavenly kingdom through a mortification of their flesh. Furthermore, the presence of the Spirit as gift of God enables this crucifixion or mortification of the flesh, just as obedience to the rule was a sign of the Spirit's presence in the second sermon at Neustift two years earlier—only now he applies it to the monks *qua* Christians, to their personal rather than monastic reform.

What has changed in Cusanus's monastic reform sermons by this point largely outweighs what remains. He resumes the rhetoric of personal rather than observant reform from the first round of visitations and he uses obedience as a sign of the Spirit's presence the way he did in his

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[83] He presumably makes recourse here to a narrative about the founding of the monastery and its symbolic meaning. The critical apparatus includes reference to Anselm Sparber, *Das Bistum Sabiona in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Bressanone: A. Weger, 1942), but the title was not available for confirmation.

[84] "Crucifixus resurrexit," *Sermo* 245.11, 4–12 (*h* XIX: 277): "Discutiamus igitur hodie in conspectu eius in hoc monte, ubi primum in hiis partibus pulso daemone crux erecta legitur, vitam nostram et an in nobis sit veraciter Christus crucifixus tamquam lumen et forma vitae nostrae, quia si sic, tunc mundus liste nobis viluit et nos sumus mundo crucifixi, et nobis mundus, quia ille in nobis vivit, cuius 'regnum non est de hoc mundo'."

[85] "Crucifixus resurrexit," *Sermo* 245.12, 1–11 (*h* XIX: 277): "Pietas et misericordia ostendent nos christiformes et Dei filios, quia ipsum apud nos habemus cuius spiritu movemur; qui recipientes ipsum facit filios Dei, quos carne mortificatos resurgere facit in spiritu ad consedendum secum in gloria Dei Patris. Quod si non habemus in nobis effectualiter Christum crucifixum, quem imitamur actu et opere, compungamur et petamus spiritum bonum, quia non denegabit petenti dare spiritum vitae, pro quo ultro et spontanee mortuus est, ut viveret."

more strict observant sermons. Yet *christiformitas* as a model of personal reform has by now become central. The image of Christ as object of imitation through which one attains salvation displaces the rule as a means to salvation. He addresses the monks firstly as Christians and only after that as the religious. Conformity to the person of Jesus is the goal of their personal reform. There are no ancillary arguments regarding obedience to prelates or monastic rules. Operative here is the Dionysian notion of perfection through imitation, or participation in the likeness of deity. This becomes the primary metaphor for spiritual renewal more broadly and he applies it locally to the religious, albeit without using explicitly monastic language. That will require another step.

1457 Monastic Visitation Sermons

The last series of monastic reform sermons Cusanus delivered in Brixen preceded the visitation of Neustift in May 1457, which came to pass only after a lengthy and acrimonious battle between Cusanus and the prior, Kasper von Aigner.[86] Due to the increasing conflict with the duke over ongoing monastic reforms, the prior was not eager to lose Sigismund as his "protector" (*Vogt*) as the Clares had. He appealed to Sigismund to stay the bishop's hand, and in response Cusanus called Aigner to Brixen, where he reproached and excommunicated him.[87] The conflict worsened through much of 1456, as the bishop and the Neustift order fought over mining rights in the local village, Villanders.[88] By early 1457, the situation came to an amenable resolution. The parties agreed to visitation in May 1457 under the auspices of St. Dorothy's

[86] For general discussion of the affair, see Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 101–04; Hallauer, "Chorherrenstift Neustift," 311–14; and Pavlac, "The Curse of Cusanus," 208.

[87] For whatever reason, Aigner did not realize the severity of the measure and proceeded to say mass the next day, after which he received a note from Cusanus reminding him that excommunication prohibited him from celebrating the Eucharist.

[88] Watanabe, *Concord and Reform*, 143.

priory in Vienna. The prior of St. Dorothy, Nicholas, had been a visitor to Neustift in 1451, and he along with another canon, Stephan Landeskron, would supervise the visitation. Landeskron saw the reform through to completion, resulting in a reform charter signed on July 18 that achieved the bishop's long desired goal of *plenam et perfectam observanciam*.[89] Prior to this summer visitation, however, Cusanus delivers a pair of sermons in order to prepare the canons for the impending reform. Since the occasion was a belated visitation, it fell to him to address the situation and set the tone for the coming visitors. Consequently, these two sermons provide him ample opportunity to do what the 1455 and 1456 sermons at Neustift and Säben only suggested: to apply *christiformitas* as imitation of Christ to the religious *qua* the religious and to the reform of their house.

The first sermon, delivered May 23, 1457, takes place on the first of the rogation days immediately prior to the Ascension. Four moves essentially constitute the sermon. The first lays the groundwork for conformity to Christ by arguing that the human is constituted in the image of the Trinity, which is also the object of its conformity.[90] The intellectual nature is equated with the interior man and is modeled after the Father; the Word is the means by which the likeness to the Father is conceived in the intellectual nature or inner man; and the Spirit is the movement (*motus*) of the will toward that end.[91] The second section applies this movement of the Spirit to obedience, in particular obedience to the monastic rule, much as Cusanus had in the 1454 sermons to the Brixen Clares and the Neustift canons. Citing Pseudo-Dionysius's claim in *Celestial Hierarchy* that all virtue is generated from essence, he argues that all works are moved

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[89] Watanabe, *Concord and Reform*, 143.

[90] This has its roots in the Augustinian notion of the *imago Dei* in *De Trinitate*. On this concept in Cusanus and its relation to Augustine, see Haubst, *Das Bild des Einen*, 145–202.

[91] "Pater vester caelestis dabit vobis," *Sermo* 282.1–2 (*h* XIX: 606).

by some spirit, either the spirit of this world, which effects concupiscence, or the spirit of the "heavenly or other world" (*caelestis seu alterius mundi*), which leads to charity.[92] He uses this distinction again to divide the religious into two types, each of which follows a particular spirit for a particular end:

> For if someone enters religion so that he might acquire things which are of this world—purely bodily refection, peace and honor and such—this is headlong from a malignant spirit. Indeed the one who is in religion and for the end that he might be called holy and might be honored and might not be chastised, and fusses to his prelate about observing the rule, is moved by a malignant spirit; for the end of his observance is his own pleasure. But those are led by the spirit of God, who separate themselves from the world that they might die to the world and live to God, who strive to please no one but God, who delights them rather than the corruptible world. They have the spirit who carries them upward to God. I say upward, that we might know there is a separation from the sensible and corruptible world to the immortal virtues, where the dwelling of the immortal God is.[93]

The division between those who are led by a "malignant spirit" and those who are led by the "spirit of God" is similar to the distinction Cusanus made earlier in *Sermo* 166, when he separates the false (*ficto*) religious from the true (*verus*). In both cases, what distinguishes the two groups of religious is the presence of the Holy Spirit that expresses itself in commitment to the rule and hope for salvation.

The third section, however, contains a notable shift that will augment this monastic *corpus permixtum*. He concerns himself with the goal or end of obedience to the rule, not simply the means or *motus* behind it. Again, as in *Sermo* 166, he expresses it in terms of suffering for a greater purpose. The religious should seek to know one thing and one thing only—"that he might

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[92] "Pater vester caelestis dabit vobis," *Sermo* 282.3 (*h* XIX: 607).

[93] "Pater vester caelestis dabit vobis," *Sermo* 282.4, 10–17 (*h* XIX: 608): "Religionem enim si quis intrat, ut ea quae huius mundi sunt, acquirat, puta corporalem refectionem, pacem et honorem et huiusmodi, hic incitatus est per spiritum malignum. Sic qui est in religione et ad finem, ut dicatur sanctus et honoretur et non corripiatur, a praelato suo observare regulam satagit, ex maligno spiritu movetur; nam finis illius observantiae est sui ipsius dilectio. Sed spiritu Dei illi ducuntur, qui se a mundo separarunt, ut sint mortui mundo et Deo vivant, qui non nisi Deo complacere student, quem diligunt et non corruptibilem mundum. Illi habent spiritum, qui eos vehit sursum ad Deum. Sursum dico, ut intelligamus separationem a mundo isto sensibili et corruptibili ad virtutes immortales, ubi est immortalis Dei mansio."

know how to be obedient" (*ut sciat oboedientiam esse*).[94] Obedience is the goal of the religious and the basis for their future judgment. Playing on the rogation theme for the day, he directs them to ask God for obedience the same way that Solomon asked for wisdom. But one must expect that with any such request there will be a corollary and requisite change. In the same way that someone who asks to become an artisan should expect first to be trained to that end, so too the religious "who desires to have the virtue of obedience...seeks it and knocks for it, that he might attain it. And then he tries to grasp it, insofar as he delights in obedience." Again, as in *Sermo* 166, this distinguishes the *verus* religious from the *ficto* religious: "Murmuring is the sign of the inhabitance of the arrogant and the spirit of arrogance, but submitting to authorities with joy is the sign of the good spirit."[95] This sermon differentiates itself from its predecessor, though, by employing the *christiformitas* image. Now, the religious does not merely obey the rule as a means of attaining salvation, but first the inner man must attain to a higher standard as a sign of the Spirit's movement. That image to which he conforms himself is Christ:

> Whoever desires to become a son of God: he follows Christ until he becomes *christiform* and delights in the life of Christ. He puts on Christ and asks for and receives his name, as in Sunday's gospel [John 16, 23f]. For no one is able to obtain anything from the Father apart from the Son, in whom the Father delights and to whom he gives all things. And thus it is necessary that whoever desires to be heard, he should be like Christ through participation in his form, which is the form acceptable to God, since it is the form of virtue.[96]

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[94] "Pater vester caelestis dabit vobis," *Sermo* 282.11 (*ñ* XIX: 609).

[95] "Pater vester caelestis dabit vobis," *Sermo* 282.12, 8–19 (*ñ* XIX: 610): "Sed quis est, qui petit nise ille, qui se ad hoc adaptat ut impetret? Aliquis petit fieri faber: ille scit, quod fabrificando fit faber. Sic et religiosus, qui vult habere virtutem oboedientiae, oboediendo illam petit, quaerit et pulsat, ut ad ipsam perveniat. Et tunc se accepisse experitur, quando inoboedientia delectatur. Unde delectatio est signum, quod spiritus caritatis inhabitat animam. Murmuratio est signum inhabitantis superbi et superbi spiritus, sed pronitas parendi cum gaudio est signum boni spiritus."

[96] "Pater vester caelestis dabit vobis," *Sermo* 282.13, 1–9 (*ñ* XIX: 610): "Quis vult fieri filius Dei: ille sequitur Christum quousque fiat christiformis et delectetur in vita Christi. Ille induit Christum et nomine eius petit et accipit, ut in evangelio dominicae. Nam nemo potest a Patre quicquam obtinere nisi Filius, quem Pater diligit et omnia ei dat. Et ideo necesse est quod qui vult exaudiri, Christus sit per participationem formae eius, quae est forma grata Deo, quia est forma virtutum."

The result is filiation, which occurs through conformity to Christ. In this particular instance, that means one imitates Christ by asking for obedience to the rule. Cusanus then deftly makes recourse to other exemplars for the Augustinian canons as he had earlier in *Sermo* 201. "St. Augustine had the form of Christ, and if you will have the form of Augustine, you should put on the form of Christ likewise, as the Apostle Paul who had the form of Christ summoned hearers to his form. Behold, such are the things they should truly ask for and receive."[97] *Christiformitas* is the salvific end of the religious life. Paul was *christiform*, Augustine was *christiform*, and so too should these Augustinian canons be *christiform* by imitating Christ and asking for a *christiform* obedience.

The final section of the sermon brings these notions of movement by the Spirit, obedience to the end of salvation, and conformity to Christ into clear relation. First, he recalls from earlier in the sermon his concept of a divine similitude in the rational soul that seeks conformity to its image by the impulse of the Holy Spirit. By "praying, seeking, and knocking," the image in man might "accede to conformity with its exemplar."[98] Faith then is the means by which the Holy Spirit propels the religious to seek conformity in "perfect obedience." From faith one seeks the "filiation of God" or "ultimate blessedness" and this comes about only through "conformity to Christ" that expresses itself in such perfect obedience.[99] If conformity to Christ is here

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[97] "Pater vester caelestis dabit vobis," *Sermo* 282.13, 10–15 (*h* XIX: 610): "Sanctus Augustinus habuit formam Christi, et vos si formam Augustini habueritis, similiter formam Christi induistis, sicut Paulus apostolus qui habet formam Christi, invitavit auditores ad formam suam. Ecce tales sunt, qui vere petuntet accipiunt."

[98] "Pater vester caelestis dabit vobis," *Sermo* 282.15, 6–14 (*h* XIX: 611): "Unde videtur, quod intra nostrum rationale spiritum sit quaedam viva imago divinae sapientiae, ad quam dum respicimus, movemur per quendam divinum impulsum ad petendum, quaerendum et pulsandum ea quae sunt perficientia imaginem seu ipsam ad exemplaris conformitatem ducentia. Nam iste est motus imaginis ut imaginis, ut ad conformitatem sui exemplaris accedat."

[99] "Pater vester caelestis dabit vobis," *Sermo* 282.16, 1–9 (*h* XIX: 611): "Nam spiritus fidei', in quo credimus Christum Filium Dei, nos movet, ut quaeramus viam perveniendi ad filiationem Dei, quae est ultima felicitas. Et hoc erit, quando ad conformitatem Christi pervenerimus. Non enim est illa conformitas, quam perfidem nos habituros speramus, aliud quam filiatio Dei. Consisitit autem via in oboedientia perfecta, quae exaltavit Christum super Omnia."

coextensive with filiation, realized at the attainment of eternal felicity, then the perfect obedience of the religious is itself a desideratum of the monastic life for which one should pray:

> Therefore you should pray, religious, that *christiform* obedience might be given you, and you will have what you desire. For as long as you do not follow Christ, who is the way of obedience, you will not attain to the truth of felicity or to eternal life. If however you are prepared to be obedient to God in the prelate "to death, even to death on a cross," indeed even to the most terrible things, you will be the perfect religious and blessed *christiform* sons of God, and you will have secured the good spirit, even the Spirit of Christ, whom the Father gives, that by this gift he might produce sons conforming to Christ.[100]

Christiformitas describes the nature of religious obedience and is a gateway through which the religious attain eternal life. The monk obeys God "in the prelate" to such a degree that he will suffer all in order to obtain perfect obedience. Those who achieve perfect obedience are adopted sons of God because they have conformed to the image of Christ. The goal is filiation, produced by the Spirit who compels all—the religious included—to works of obedience:

> Therefore all those who truly consider God the Father as father are [his] sons, because they have in themselves the spirit of Christ, the Son of God, and they show the movement of the spirit by *christiform* works. And this is the only knowledge which makes known to us the sons of God, indeed *christiformitas*. All observance of religion strives to lead to this; for there is no religion other than the way which will attain to the spirit of Christ, who is not of this world.[101]

Finally, he urges them to submit to the proposed visitation under the hand of the house at Vienna, exaggerating for effect that this submission should imitate Jesus even to the point of death. The medieval counsels of perfection return in the final section of this sermon, but with a

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[100] "Pater vester caelestis dabit vobis," *Sermo* 282.17, 1–12 (*ñ* XIX: 611): "Petere igitur debetis, religiosi, ut vobis christiformis detur oboedientia, et habetis quicquid optatis. Quamdiu enim non sequimini Christum, qui est via oboedientiae, ad veritatem felicitates atque ad vitam aeternam non pervenietis. Si autem oboedire instituitis Deo in praelato 'usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis', scilicet usque ad ultimum terribilissimorum, perfecti estis religiosi et christiformes filii Dei benedicti, et adepti estis spiritum bonum, scilicet Spiritum Christi, quem Pater dat, ut hoc dono filios Christo conformes efficia."

[101] "Pater vester caelestis dabit vobis," *Sermo* 282.18, 1–11 (*ñ* XIX: 611): "Omnes igitur veraciter Deum Patrem ut patrem habentes filii sunt, quia in se habent spiritum Christi Filii Dei, et opera christiformia ostendunt spiritum motorem. Et haec est unica scientia quae dat nobis notitiam filiorum Dei scilicet christiformitas. Ad hanc nititur ducere omnis religionis observantia; nam non est religio nisi via perveniendi ad spiritum Christi, qui non est de hoc mundo."

notable twist. Obedience is still the mark of the religious and the means of their salvation, only now the goal is not slavish conformity to the rule. Rather, the religious share the same aim as the faithful, clergy and laity alike: *christiformitas*. For the religious, observance of the rule entails *christiformitas* and is not an additional step beyond it. Their imitation of Christ implies submission to their religious rule. Christ takes his place atop the salvific hierarchy of obedience and the religious orient their conformity to him, not the rule.

Cusanus reiterates this use of *christiformitas* in his final sermon at Neustift, preached two days later on the Vigil of the Ascension. Though lacking the strictly monastic elements its predecessor had, it nevertheless buttresses the concept of *christiformitas* as personal reform of the regular clergy by explaining how it applies more broadly to the monks *qua* Christians. The sermon itself is an exposition of John 16 and 17, where Cusanus treats mostly metaphysical concepts such as the intellective nature of salvation and the Trinitarian nature of revelation. He describes eternal life as the attainment of truth by the "interior intellective man" in contrast with "external vision." To understand the truth is to apprehend "intellectually," not to see it with "external vision."[102] As in the previous sermon, he uses the relationship between Father and Son to underscore the communication of this truth and its corresponding effect. The Son manifests the Father to the world and through this manifestation the Father gives the Son the power to provide eternal life for humanity.[103] This enables the Christian to live abundantly, insofar as one submits to that power revealed in the "law, commandment, precept, and the like" which the Son

[102] "Sublevatis oculis," *Sermo* 283.2, 1–14 (*h* XIX: 613): "Qui scit veram vitam esse in intellectuali na tura, quae sola est veritatis capax, ille scit quod interior homo intellectualis, si induit veritatem quae est aeterna, habet immortalem vitam. Intellectus enim in veritate est in caelo suo et paradiso deliciarum; nam in veritate vivit delectabili ter, et veritas est pascentia vitae eius. Intelligere enim est ei vivere, et intelligere non est nisi veritatem apprehendere, et hoc est cognoscere. Sicut videre est vivere visui exteriori, sic intelligere est vivere intellectui. Visus si clare et limpide videt visibile, est in caelo suo et paradiso et nihil plus appetit, quia ibi deliciatur vitaliter. Sic de intellectu quoad veritatem."

[103] "Sublevatis oculis," *Sermo* 283.4–6 (*h* XIX: 614).

reveals. "To obey" this, then, "is to live."[104] Such obedience, moreover, is not strictly hierocratic submission, but intellective ascent:

> This knowledge (*cognitio*), to know that God the Father of Jesus is the only 'true God', is life eternal. For this is the apprehension of understanding or living eternally. To know eternal life is to comprehend it in the spirit. But since this comprehension cannot come about except through the revelation (*ostensionem*) of the Son, therefore it happens then through the knowledge (*congitionem*) of the Son. For the knowledge of the Son is the means for this, since the Son is known (*est notitia*) by the Father, as the knowledge (*cognitio*) of the word of the teacher is the means of attaining (*pertingendi*) to his understanding (*intellectum*), and he who does not have knowledge (*notitiam*) of the word, does not attain (*attingent*) to the father of the word, indeed understanding (*intellectum*).[105]

Obedience as eternal life has to do with reception of the truth of the Father mediated through the word, Jesus, not with submission to authority. The recipient obeys what Christ, the legate of the Father, reveals about the Father: "Christ therefore, since he is Son, is legate of the knowledge of the Father. So it is necessary to know that Jesus is the Christ sent from God the Father, who has the power of giving eternal life, that is of intellectively revealing (*ostendendi intellectui*) the Father, whose revelation (*ostensio*) is knowledge (*cognitio*)."[106] Obedience assumes an entirely different visage in this line of thought, as does the traditional legate imagery. They both represent mediations of saving knowledge through which the individual attains salvation. "To

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[104] "Sublevatis oculis," *Sermo* 283.7, 1–11 (*fi* XIX: 615): "Unde haec est virtus divinae potestatis, ut illi qui ei subsunt, abundantius vivant. Vita enim quae est et potestas se ipsam donat in pabulum subditis. Ita lex, mandatum, praeceptum et quaeque talia illius potestatis sunt vita, et oboedire est vivere. Petit igitur Christus taliter clarificari, sicut est sua potestas, hoc est ut notitia eius sit tanta quod homines eius potestatem cognoscant, puta ut sciant quod omnes, qui ipsum recipient pro filio et herede regis vitae, sciant se ab ipso aeternaliter vivificari."

[105] "Sublevatis oculis," *Sermo* 283.8, 5–17 (*fi* XIX: 615): "Haec cognitio, scilicet Deum Patrem Iesu solum 'verum Deum' cognoscere, est vita aeterna. Est enim haec apprehensio intelligere seu vivere aeternaliter. Aeternam vitam cognoscere est ipsam in spiritu comprehendere. Sed quia haec comprehensio non potest fieri nisi per ostensionem Filii ideo fit per cognitionem Filii. Cognitio enim Filii est medium huius, quia Filius est notitia Patris, sicut cognitio verbi doctoris est medium pertingendi ad eius intellectum, et ille qui non habet notitiam verbi, non attingit ad patrem verbi, scilicet intellectum."

[106] "Sublevatis oculis," *Sermo* 283.9, 1–5 (*fi* XIX: 615): "Christus igitur, quia Filius, est legatus cognitionis Patris. Oportet igitur scire Iesum [esse] Christum a Deo Patre esse missum, qui habet potestatem dandi vitam aeternam, hoc est ostendendi intellectui Patrem, quae ostensio est cognitio."

obey" in itself is not to live, but to live is "to obey" Christ, the "legate of the Father," in that which he has revealed.[107] Again, imitiation entails obedience.

He will later integrate *christiformitas* into this discussion to describe how intellective obedience to Christ results in salvation. He does this by connecting the relationship of *christiformitas* with filiation and the beatific vision. *Christiformitas* produces filiation. The one who conforms himself to Christ keeps the teaching of the Son, which is given by the Father, and in so doing participates in that very word of the Son himself:

> The Father therefore chooses from all those who have seen the glory of his kingdom with his Son Jesus, who are therefore called his, since the sons or adopted [sons] are chosen from the world for the hereditary possession of the kingdom. The Father gave them his Son Jesus, that they might be his brothers and might be under him, who is "first born" and the principal thing holding all things together. And they keep the teaching (*sermonem*), which God desired to manifest to them through Jesus. Thus since they keep it, they have been made *christiform* and "sons of God" through participation. The natural Son of God the Father is his word or sermon or Logos, the sons of adoption or through participation are those who keep the teaching of the sermon (*doctrinam sermonis*).[108]

Jesus as exemplar for conformity is not an abstraction. On the contrary, he is an active image to which the individual conforms through keeping his teaching. Insofar as they keep the teaching, they become *christiform* and adopted sons. He likens this to the heat of a fire, which is hot by nature but by participating in the heat is made more so. Those who participate in Christ keep his teaching and in so doing are conformed to the word himself. *Christiformitas* beomes a participatory reality mediated by revelation and through which one imitates Christ as exemplar in

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[107] Herold seemingly overstates the case that the tone of the later sermons becomes harsher and obedience becomes a dominant image, Herold, "Doctrinae oboedientiae," 176. On the contrary, obedience takes a christological hue and becomes subordinate to mystical union with Christ, as Euler suggests, "Oboedire est vivere," 31–32.

[108] "Sublevatis oculis," *Sermo* 283.17, 1–20 (*fi* XIX: 617): "Pater itaque ex omnibus aliquos elegit, qui cum Iesu Filio suo gloriam regni sui visuri sunt, qui dicuntur ideo sui, quia filii sui adoptivi de mundo electi ad possidendum hereditatem regni. Hos Pater dedit Filio suo Iesu, ut sint sui fratres et sub ipso, qui est 'primogenitus' et principatum tenens in omnibus. Et illi sermonem, quem Deus per Iesum eis voluit manifestari, servaverunt. Ideo quia servaverunt illum, facti sunt christiformes et 'filii Dei' per participationem. Naturalis Filius Dei Patris est verbum seu sermo seu logos eius, filii adoptionum seu per participationem qui servant doctrinam sermonis."

order to conform to him as the *verbum Dei* and "legate" of the Father. The relationship between life and obedience does not imply coercion on the part of a hierocrat, nor submissiveness on the part of the religious, but rather the intellective ascent to Christ that expresses itself in both moral and theological conformity to him.

Cusanus's use of *christiformitas* as image of personal reform enables him to reorient his approach to monastic reform. One is not obedient to the rule for the sake of salvation, but rather because obedience is itself an imitation of Christ and through such obedience one attains complete *christiformitas*: perfect obedience, filiation, theosis, eternal blessedness. In this sense, it is both a means and an end; doing *christiform* works ineluctably results in being *christiform*. The one who was perfectly obedient even to death on a cross provides the image to which all Christians, including the religious, will be conformed in felicity at the beatific vision. Cusanus can now address the canons *qua* canons in the sense that obedience to the rule is the way in which they are *christiform* and reach salvation, but their *christiform* salvation occurs *qua* Christians, not canons. This represents again the inversion of the traditional medieval counsels of perfection. He necessitates obedience for all, though there are no greater or lesser degrees of obedience depending on one's estate. On the contrary, Christ himself embodied perfect obedience, and through conformity to him and his *doctrina*, one attains *christiformitas*. Submission to a monastic rule, then, becomes a logical consequence of *christiform* obedience to Jesus amongst the religious, not a mark unique to the monastic estate like that of the earlier *vita apostolica*.[109]

[109] On this, see Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages: The Historical Links between Heresy, the Mendicant Orders, and the Women's Religious Movement in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Century, with Historical Foundations of German Mysticism*, trans. Steven Rowan (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1995), 7–30.

Monastic Reform and the Brixen Religious

The product of Cusanus's monastic reform sermons provides a clue to both his ecclesiastical challenges and his theological development during the period at Brixen. Given the widespread opposition to reforms initiated by a bishop imposed on the diocese against its will and supported by a papal bull, he had to search for creative ways to articulate the reform of the regular clergy and persuade them of its value. His first attempts, in Säben and Neustift in 1453, reflect his prevailing assumption that the religious were seeking their salvation in their monastic life, and he exhorts them to that end. After the second visit of Sonnenburg in late 1453 and the dire prognostication about their prospects for reform, he begins employing a method that appears authoritarian at first glance. In his visits to the Poor Clares of Brixen and the Neustift canons, he frames obedience to the monastic rule as a means of salvation and as a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit. The first two rounds of sermons lack a connection between the personal reform of the monk as a Christian and the exigency of reforming the religious order toward an observance of its rule. What Cusanus comes to realize in his ongoing struggles for the reform of Sonnenburg, his stinted effort at St. Georgenberg, and the opposition from the Clares is what he failed to understand on the legation: all religious do not share the same understanding of the monastic estate as salvation through the rule. A disconnect makes itself apparent between the reform of the orders and the salvific attainment of mystical union with Christ.

His third round of monastic visitation sermons begins to suggest a way forward. In brief sermons to Neustift during the second half of 1455, and over a year later in a return visit to Säben, the concept of observant reform in order to attain salvation disappears. *Christiformitas* as his primary image for personal reform replaces it. Christ is the exemplar of exemplars and through conformity to him the soul guides the sinful body to put off fleshly desires and put on Christ. In the intervening year Cusanus will develop these ideas further. The final evolution of

his monastic visitation sermons occurs in the controversial and much delayed second official visitation of Neustift. There he finally brings together three important strands of his reform ideas from throughout the Brixen period. The personal reform of the old Adam into the image of the heavenly Christ remains. Obedience to the rule as a sign of the Holy Spirit also returns to the discussion. But the lynchpin is *christiformitas* as an image of personal reform of the religious *qua* Christians. By the time he delivers the May 1457 sermons at Neustift in preparation for the ensuing visitation, the bishop finally makes the connection between the personal reform of the religious as Christians and their observant reform. *Christiformitas*, he argues, is the means by which the individual soul attains salvation through obedience. The imitation of Christ himself leads to the perfect obedience of the individual, and because the monastic rule was established for the salvation of the religious submitted to it, observance of the rule is in fact a means of attaining salvation through such perfect obedience. It is not the rule itself, but obedience to Christ that produces *christiformitas* in the religious. Cusanus inverts the medieval counsels of perfection in order to make conformity to Christ primary in the life of the religious, which reflects his understanding of the *vita contemplativa* as a means of salvation.

It is hard to say precisely what occasioned this final change for Cusanus. There were numerous circumstantial factors from the rough and tumble months of mid-1455 on that give good cause. The excommunication of Verena von Stubben (threated in in April 1455, announced in July), the election of Calixtus III (May 1455), and the delayed visitation of Neustift and excommunication of Kasper von Aigner (spring 1456) all provide sufficient stimulus to reconsider his approach. As the previous chapter suggested, however, the bishop's revisitation of the *corpus Dionysiacum* also coincided with a parallel development in his concepts of church and reform. The shifting view of monastic reform expressed in the sermons comports well both chronologically and conceptually with his broader development during the Brixen tenure. The

church as a mystical body hierarchically oriented toward salvific union with Christ gives Cusanus the images he needs to identify the religious as a *corpus permixtum* and posit Christ as the head of that mystical hierarchy. *Christiformitas* likewise provides him an image of personal reform by which the religious might seek union with Christ through imitation and perfection, inclusive of obedience to the rule as a local application of the *imitatio Christi*. These two concepts applied to monastic reform essentially invert the traditional counsels of perfection, placing the threefold Christian estates on a level plane and enabling each to pursue the same mystical union with Christ, if through different means. Cusanus's approach to monastic reform will evolve in tandem with his pastoral reform among the regular and secular clergy of Brixen and the ideas he articulates there will further complement his Dionysian-influenced reform of the religious.

CHAPTER FIVE

PASTORAL REFORM IN THE BRIXEN SERMONS

Nicholas of Cusa's efforts to reform the diocesen clergy, like the monastic reform alongside it, reflected a broader movement in the late medieval church. The conciliar movement to which Cusanus owed much of his early notoriety arose in large part due to a desire for reform of the clergy. Through the later Middle Ages repeated calls for a reform of the church in head and members (*reformatio in capite et membris*) expressed the desire to begin reform with pope and curia under the assumption that it would have a corresponding effect on the clergy at the diocesan level.[1] The Council of Vienne (1311) first lodged a conciliar cry for the *reformatio in capite et membris*.[2] The Council of Constance (1414–18) proceeded on this assumption that the reform of the higher clergy would eventuate in the reform of the diocesan clergy, ensconced in the 1418 decree *Frequens* that stipulated the regular convocation of councils for purposes of reform.[3] The Council of Basel (1431–49) met in order to continue these reform efforts and only raised the question of conciliar authority over the papacy when Eugenius IV resisted.[4] There were numerous problems within the ranks of the late medieval clergy that necessitated reform. One was the tandem of pluralism and absenteeism depriving diocesan parishes of their bishops and leaving them a less qualified or less competent vicar to care for pastoral duties. Due to the

[1] On this trajectory in late medieval reform, see Jedin, *History of the Council*, 1:5–165; Frech, *Reform*, 91–108; Pascoe, *Jean Gerson*, 146–74; and Bellitto, *Renewing Christianity*, 105–18.

[2] On the use of the formula at Vienne, see Fasolt, *Council and Hierarchy*, 115–216, and Frech, *Reform*, 193–214.

[3] Stump, *Council of Constance*, 138–69, and Alberigo, *Chiesa Conciliare*, 187–228.

[4] Krämer, *Konsens und Rezeption*, 12–86, and Decaluwe, *Successful Defeat*, 174–91.

benefice system inherited from medieval feudalism, the more intellectually gifted or better educated clergy often found their way out of the diocesan parish and into the service of curia, secular court, or university.[5] A related demand arose for regular preaching on the part of diocesan bishops or parish priests, but gone unfulfilled it would devolve to mendicant preachers or humanist rhetoricians.[6] The misuse of the penitential system, in particular hearing confessions for pecuniary gain, also caused much consternation among clergy and faithful alike.[7] Beyond more vocational obligations, there remained problems of clerical morality, especially concubinage.[8]

Cusanus had long concerned himself with the reform of the clergy, even if his ecclesiastical duties since Basel had not given him occasion to address it. The conciliar *De concordantia catholica* approached clerical reform from a constitutional perspective, with attention to the council as ordinary means for administration and reform of the church.[9] Like the fifteenth-century conciliar movement, however, such structural reform failed to address the deeply rooted financial, behavioral, and educational roots of the ills. Both *De concordantia catholica* and the conciliar movement focused on questions of jurisdiction—more specifically on the external

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[5] On the late medieval clergy, see Pantin, *English Church*, 9–75; Barraclough, *Papal Provisions*, 71–177; and Hay, *Europe*, 45–60. For somewhat less pessimistic appraisals, see Moeller, "Piety in Germany," 50–75; Lawrence Duggan, "The Unresponsiveness of the Late Medieval Church: A Reconsideration," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 9 (1978), 3–26; and Salonen and Hanska, *Entering a Clerical Career*, 1–18.

[6] Taylor, *Soldiers of Christ*, 15–51; Ozment, *Reformation in the Cities*, 15–46; and Mormando, *Preacher's Demons*, 1–21.

[7] For one highly critical study of the late medieval penitential system and its uses and abuses, see Thomas N. Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977). More nuanced responses to Tentler can be found in Leonard E. Boyle, "The Summa Confessors as a Genre, and its Religious Intent," in *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion*, ed. Heiko A. Oberman and Charles Trinkhaus (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), 126–31, and Lawrence G. Duggan, "Fear and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 75 (1984): 153–75.

[8] Marjorie Plummer, *From Priest's Whore to Pastor's Wife: Clerical Marriage and the Process of Reform in the Early German Reformation* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), 11–50.

[9] *DCC* II.208–46 (*fi* XIV: 250–89); Sigmund, 160–92. On the normative role of the councils in church governance, see Alberigo, *Chiesa Conciliare*, 300–22.

forum of that jurisdiction (*in foro exteriori*), which dealt with the decision-making authority of pope and council.[10] As a diocesan bishop, Cusanus would have to devote less attention to general ecclesiopolitical considerations and more to specific local exigencies and their solutions, which in turn led him to a reconsideration and adaptation of his concept of the priesthood and its function within the Dionysian hierarchies. In the same way that he applied *christiformitas* to the religious as an alternative means of encouraging observant reform, he uses the same terminology and its attendant hierarchical concepts to articulate a clerical reform that essentially collapses the distinction between the *potestas iurisdictionis* and the *potestas ordinis* and focuses on the illuminative role of the clergy and the corresponding salvation and reform of the church it produces. This would result in the pastoral reform of tasks that cut across the clerical spectrum—from preaching to catechesis to sacramental and liturgical offices.

In service of clerical reform, Cusanus employed an old conciliar convention: the diocesan synod. He had argued in *De concordantia catholica* for the usefulness of provincial synods in reforming the church and, after numerous such convocations during his legatine journey, the bishop took the same tack in his diocese.[11] The Council of Constance had stipulated the regular convocation of diocesan clergy in provincial synods, but Brixen had only followed through with such synods three times since the conciliar decree was implemented in 1419. Cusanus would convene four synods in his six years as residential bishop, meeting in 1453, 1454, 1455, and 1457.[12] The four sermons he delivers at these diocesan synods, as well as the two sermons he preaches in visitation of the Brixen cathedral chapter, give the most substantive witness to his

[10] On the relationship of the two *potestates* in the context of conciliar thought, see Tierney, *Foundations*, 31–33, 175–76; Oakley, *Western Church*, 157–74; and Thomas M. Izbicki, *Protector of the Faith: Cardinal Johannes de Turrecremata and the Defense of the Institutional Church* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1981), 53–60.

[11] *DCC* II.194–96, 199–202 (*fi* XIV: 236–39, 241–45); Sigmund, 149–51, 153–56.

ideas about pastoral reform. Like the monastic reform sermons, they represent a relatively even chronological distribution that will help assess the development of his reform ideas. The first synodal sermon, preached February 5, 1453, is the shortest and follows Sexagesima Sunday.[13] Prior to the second synod, Cusanus preaches his two sermons in visitation of the Brixen cathedral clergy on March 7, 1454, and March 12, 1454, both during the first week of Lent.[14] Seven months later, the second synodal address occurs on the feast day of St. Elizabeth, November 19, 1454.[15] His sermon at the third synod is offered on the feast day of St. Katherine, November 25, 1455.[16] Due to the omission of a 1456 synod, the last synodal homily comes on the Monday after Good Shepherd Sunday, May 2, 1457.[17]

This chapter will sketch the development of Cusanus's pastoral reform ideas as found in these six sermons delivered to his diocesan clergy. It follows the sermons and the development of their reform ideas chronologically. The first two sections cover the early clerical reform sermons and their shift from the illuminative function of the clergy within the traditional Dionysian hierarchies to a more vigorous concern with the fulfillment of their vocational obligations. The next two sections then treat the clerical reform sermons that integrate the Cusan language of *christiformitas*, both as an attribute of the illuminative function of the clergy and as an image for pastoral reform. It will conclude with an assessment of how these images reflect the

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[12] Hürten, *Akten zur Reform*, 43, and Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 237.

[13] "Qui habet aures," *Sermo* 125 (*h* XVIII: 18–19).

[14] "Veniam et curabo eum," *Sermo* 145 (*h* XVIII: 108–09), and "Dies diei eructat verbum," *Sermo* 147 (*h* XVIII: 117–121).

[15] "Tantum digne," *Sermo* 164 (*h* XVIII: 196–201).

[16] "Unde ememus panes, ut munducat hii?" *Sermo* 207 (*h* XIX: 13–18).

[17] "Ego sum pastor bonus," *Sermo* 280 (*h* XIX: 396–406). An English translation of this sermon is found in in Izbicki, *Writings on Church and Reform*, 489–527.

challenges of clerical reform in the Brixen context and how he addresses them by applying his Dionysian influenced concepts of church and reform to the clergy.

1453 Synodal Sermon

Cusanus convened his first diocesan synod in February 1453, less than a year after his arrival in Brixen and just prior to his May visit to Rome. This synod itself set the tone for his early clerical reform efforts by focusing almost exclusively on the clergy's vocational obligations. The primary concern was clergy behavior, which he addressed most notably by renewing the 1451 Salzburg decree against concubinage under threat of expulsion from the diocese and loss of benefice.[18] Other behavioral legislation included prohibitions on frequenting taverns, playing cards or dice, having long hair, and wearing large hats, jewelry, and ostentatious clothing. While these measures provoked intense criticism, much of the legislation revolved around that which "concerned the salvation of souls" and the pastoral obligation to their liturgical, sacramental, and catechetical responsibilities.[19] The clergy were to instruct the faithful more frequently in the sacraments, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer. They were to exhort them to attend mass and to forbid the distraction of selling food during mass. They were to follow the liturgical books strictly and to prohibit the playing of organ music during worship. In addition to the institution of annual synods at the 1453 convention, he recommended annual meetings of clergy chapters at three locations throughout the diocese. These synodal acts set a tone for his episcopacy. Cusanus desired the reform of the clergy in their vocational obligations, whether that of canons regular who might serve at a collegiate church or secular priests who might serve in the cathedral or a parochial church. In either case, their primary responsibility was

[18] On the regulations of the first synod, see Baum, *Nikolaus Cusanus in Tirol*, 241; Bett, *Nicholas of Cusa*, 50; and Vansteenberghe, *Cardinal Nicolas de Cues*, 140–42.

[19] Hürten, *Akten zur Reform*, 54.

pastoral care through liturgical, sacramental, catechetical, and even homiletic means that would result in the salvation of the faithful.

The first synodal homily draws attention to the function the clergy played in this salvation. Notably absent, however, is any explicit reference to the statutes promulgated at the synod. The synod itself was held on the Monday of Sexagesima and the sermon took the Gospel lesson for the preceding Sunday—the parable of the sower found in Luke 8. Playing on the text's injunction, "he who has ears for hearing, let him hear," Cusanus distinguishes those who have ears to hear from those who do not because they are "inwardly 'blind' and ignorant and 'uneducated'."[20] What differentiates the ears that hear and the ears that do not is ultimately the illumination that comes to them:

> Oh, how many there are of those, who mix themselves in among the "hearing," though they are "deaf." Nevertheless they are not "apt," as the gospel says, that they might be "disciples" of the Lord, since the "disciples" should understand the "mysteries," as the Savior told them. Moreover even now there are those among the "disciples" who are found "having ears to hear." But unless he opens up the hidden word, they are not able "to hear" what is hidden under the sensible signs of the word. But since they "are taught by God" and the disciples "who having ears hear", the secrets are opened for them through a teacher (*magistrum*). Therefore the word of the "teacher" spreads out the "mystery" no more to one than another, because he speaks through parables."[21]

In standard Cusan discourse from *De docta ignorantia* on, seeing is a matter ultimately of revelation and of the intellect moving past sensible things. In the case of Scripture, that will require a magisterial function to make clear the "hidden word." He again uses a traditional

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[20] "Qui habet aures," *Sermo* 125.2, 6–7 (*h* XVIII: 18): "Qui non 'habent aures', sunt illi, qui penitus sunt 'surdi' et ignari et 'idiotae', ut Paulus eos nominat. Dum illis loquimur 'surdo narramus fabulam'. Illi sunt, qui 'videntes non vident et audientes non audiunt'. Videre enim et audire coincidunt in proposito ex evangelio. Illi nequaquam sunt 'apti' ad 'sacerdotium', quia penitus ignari et 'surdi' et 'caeci'."

[21] "Qui habet aures," *Sermo* 125.3, 1–14 (*h* XVIII: 18–19): "O quot sunt de illis, qui se inter 'audientes', immiscent, licet sint 'surdi'. Non tamen sunt 'apti', sicut evangelium dicit, ut slnt 'discipuli,' Domini, quia 'mysteria' intellegere debent discipuli, ut hic ait salvator. Inter autem 'discipulos' adhuc reperiuntur 'aures ad audiendum'. Sed nisi verbum arcana reseret, non possunt 'audire' ea, quae latent sub sensibilibus verborum signis. Sed quia 'sunt docibiles Deo' et discipuli 'aures audiendi habentes', reserantur secreta eis per magistrum. Verbum igitur 'magistri' 'mysterium' pandit non aliud quam illud, quod 'per parabolas' loquitur."

biblical claim regarding one being "apt" to teach by identifying aptness as in fact having received the word hidden under the sensible signs of the biblical text. The "disciples" in this context are those who have received that word and, having received it through hearing by the ear, now open it for others.

The notion of the word hidden under sensible signs and the word revealed by the *magister* follows the Pauline distinction between the letter that kills and the spirit that gives life. Cusanus uses Jesus as the author of life to distinguish between the "dead letter" of the "sensible word" and the understanding of the "spiritual sense of the word hidden under sensible signs." It is the responsibility of the disciple to discern that spiritual sense. "Therefore it is necessary that the disciples of the Lord 'have ears for hearing' the Word [*Verbum*], that he might make himself known by the word."[22] Jesus as *Verbum* and *magister* is accessible only through the biblical *verba*, which contain the spiritual meaning hidden under sensible signs. Cusanus then uses the parable to describe the four "different intellectual receptions of the word (*verbi*)," where the word is either received superficially before falling by the way side, withers because it lacks moisture, is suffocated by thorns that sprout alongside "religion," or is received and kept "with a good and perfect heart" such that it bears fruit.[23] This short homily reflects the same Dionysian categories of illumination through means of the ecclesial hierarchy that were present as early as *De concordantia catholica*. For Cusanus, this comes to embody the role of the priesthood in

[22] "Qui habet aures," *Sermo* 125.4, 5–20 (*h* XVIII: 18–19): "'Littera mortua' videtur et immobilis. Sensibilis est, nec movent litterae non habentem 'aures audienda'. Si enim 'idiota' respicit 'litteras', non movetur, quia sunt 'mortua' sibi. Si vero habens intellectum eas legit, movetur ex significato. Dicit pater familias 'fac hoc, et servus facit'. Verbum sensibile non movet, quia etiam 'barbarus' et ignarus linguae sensibiliter audire posset, et tamen non moveretur. Intellectus igitur, qui est 'spiritus' sensibilis verbi latitans sub signis sensibilibus movet, 'vivificat', 'cibat', 'delectationem affert', 'illuminat' etc. Oportet igitur 'discipulos' Domini 'habere aures audiendi' Verbum, quod se ipsum verbo exprimit."

[23] "Qui habet aures," *Sermo* 125.5–6 (*h* XVIII: 18–19).

revealing Christ from the Scriptures in order to illuminate the faithful with the knowledge of Christ.

The illuminative function of the clergy will only expand over the course of the Brixen period and he will continue sharpening both the specific ways in which the church applies it and the corresponding effect it has on the faithful. One Advent 1456 sermon uses the Pauline imagery of "stewards of the mysteries of God" to make the point:

> Therefore every apostle and those who succeed them in their place, are to be regarded ministers of Christ and "stewards of the mysteries of God." Therefore Christ—the apostle of apostles—is steward of the mysteries of God, and thus through [the apostle's] ministries this commission of his legation is carried out daily. Paul, the minister of Christ, preaches nothing but Christ. Therefore the preaching of Christ is the dispensing of the mysteries of God, who opens all Scripture that Christ might be known to all. Here he makes known the hidden things, since he rightly makes clear the Scriptures, which make Christ known.[24]

As he had already articulated elsewhere, the magisterial vocation in the church devolves from the apostles to the papacy, then down to bishops and presbyters. All clergy share in the same illuminative responsibility through dispensing the mysteries. In another later sermon, he explains how Scripture illuminates the faithful by using typical Cusan-Dionysian intellective terms. Human nature is infirm in ignorance, but Scripture heals like medicine. The "physician or curate, who represents Christ" delivers this salvific medicine and "the 'word of truth' received thus liberates the soul, as 'the word of truth' of the teacher liberates the infirm intellect from the ignorance which obfuscates him and incarcerates him 'in darkness'." It is not through the "shell or visible letters or figures," but through the "invisible power which hides under the letter" that

[24] "Sic nos existimet homo," *Sermo* 256.2, 2–14 (*h* XIX: 360): "Omnis igitur apostolus et qui in eorum locum succedunt, existimandi sunt ministri Christi 'et dispensatores mysteriorum Dei'. Christus igitur apostolus apostolorum est dispensator mysteriorum Dei et per ministros suos cottidie hanc exsequitur legationis suae commissionem. Paulus minister Christi non nisi Christum evangelizabat. Igitur evangelizatio Christi est dispensatio mysteriorum Dei qui omnem scripturam sic aperit quod in omnibus reperitur Christus. Hic occulta eius manifestat, quia hic recte enodat scripturas, qui eas de Christo esse manifesta."

faith in Christ comes, and the priesthood is the means for mediating that.[25] In both cases, the lower clergy reveal the proclamation of Christ vouchsafed by the apostles and their successors and devolving to the *membra* of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

At this stage in Cusanus's Brixen tenure, however, it is not altogether clear how he envisions this illumination occurring vocationally. He locates it in the priestly office, but does not identify whether it is a liturgical and sacramental illumination, as it stands in the Dionysian hierarchies, or homiletic or even catechetical, which would accord with the magisterial function of the clergy in the church. In a sermon presumably delivered to the gathered Brixen clergy on Judica 1454, he compares the task of oral proclamation with the celebration of the mass. He first calls the sermon itself the "bread of life" akin to the Eucharist because it mediates the word to the faithful.[26] Both are proclamations of Christ and both effect a change in the recipient. In the same way that the "sensible bread" of the mass becomes "food for the soul" when the priest transforms it by uniting the bread with the "Word of life," so too are the faithful transformed "into union with the Word of life" through preaching. This makes the proclamation of Christ the "highest *christiform* and apostolic office."[27] While preaching and the Eucharist roughly parallel

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[25] "Domine, adiuva me," *Sermo* 272.9, 6–24 (*h* XIX: 502): "Unde anima fidelis infirma esse potest, et quamdiu se cognoscit infirmam, adhuc vivit in ipsa spiritus cognitionis. Illa accedit ad verbum vitae, quod in Sacra Scriptura est absconditum, et recipit ipsum tamquam medicinam salutarem a medico seu curato, qui vices gerit Christi. Tunc receptum 'verbum veritatis' liberat animam, sicut 'verbum veritatis' magistti liberat infirmum intellectum ab ignorantia, quae ipsum obfuscat et 'in tenebris' incarcerat. Unde sicut herba non curat infirmitatem corporalem nisi per invisibilem virtutem, quae sub visibili colore et figura latet, sic Scriptum non liberat animam infirmam per corticem aut visibiles litteras seu figuras, sed per virtutem invisibilem, quae latet sub littera, quam intellectus videt mediante fide Christi; sicut medicus videt virtutem herbae mediante fide Hippocratis, credit tamen Hippocrati, qui sibi virtutem eius revelavit."

[26] "Si quis sermonem meum servaverit," *Sermo* 152.7, 5–9 (*h* XVIII: 147): "Unde, sicut in pane visibili est cibatio invisibilis sub visibili specie, sic sub sermone audibili est verbum cibans animam, sicut sub sermone magistri est verbum illuminans animam sapientia."

[27] "Si quis sermonem meum servaverit," *Sermo* 152.9, 3–13 (*h* XVIII: 148): "Et nota, quo modo cibus contra mortem est sermo Verbi Dei, et sacramentum eucharistiae est sacramentum huius. Nam est panis sensibilis in apparentia, sed fide cibus animae. Verbum enim sacerdotis per fidem transfert sensibilem panem in carnem unitam Verbo vitae. Sic sermo Christi si recipitur in anima et servatus fuerit, transfert creaturam in unionem Verbi vitae. Id igitur, quod agit sacerdos in altari per modum sacramenti, facit evangelizans in veritate. Maximum igitur et

one another, the role of the clergy in the respective acts is different. The "material of bread necessarily obeys," but the rational soul does not. "It is necessary that the soul be inclined to reception."[28] The reception of the word depends not only upon the hearer, but upon the competence of the preacher as well. Cusanus essentially intones the Augustinian affirmation of sacramental validity made during the Donatist controversy in order to place the clergy on a graded hierarchy according to their intellective competence.[29] The celebration of the mass is independent of the competence of the priest; not so for the sermon. "One priest consecrates like another," but the proclamation of Christ is "not equivalent among all priests." Instead, it is a "higher power" exercised by those with the greater magisterial function.

Much ambiguity remains over the relationship between the various clerical offices in this graded hierarchy. Cusanus works within the Dionysian model and his emphasis on the intellective competence expressed by the hierarchs owes most to the mystagogy of Pseudo-Dionysius, but he has yet to connect it with upward ascent toward union with Christ that will mark his later Brixen sermons. These early conceptions of clerical reform assumed, but failed to detail, the direct correlation between the illuminative function of the clergy and the salvation of the faithful. As with the monastic reform sermons, he has not yet faced opposition to his reform efforts, nor is he fully aware of the pastoral problems throughout the Tyrol. This will come in

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altissimum officium est evangelizare atque in hoc mundo christiforme et apostolicum." To my knowledge, this is the first application of *christiformitas* to the clergy in the Brixen sermons.

[28] "Si quis sermonem meum servaverit," *Sermo* 152.9, 14–21 (*h* XVIII: 148): "Refert autem inter conficientem et evangelizantem. Nam materia panis necessario oboedit; non sic materia verbi, scilicet animae rationalis, quae est quasi materia, cuius verbum est forma formans, scilicet ad se convertendo. Sed oportet, quod anima se inclinet ad receptionem. Ubi enim esset malivola, in eam non intraret spiritus sapientiae seu vitae aeternae."

[29] "Si quis sermonem meum servaverit," *Sermo* 152.10, 14–19 (*h* XVIII: 149): "Evangelizare igitur non competit aeque omnibus sacerdotibus sicut consecrare, immo est altioris virtutis, et primis in ecclesia Dei, qui sunt successores apostolorum, competit et allis tunc tantum, quando ipsi per illos mittuntur."

due time and, when it does, the bishop will finally make explicit the relationship between the vocational responsibilities of the clergy and salvation which they mediate through their office.

1454 Synodal and Chapter Visitation Sermons

Cusanus's attention shifts markedly after the return from Rome in fall 1453. He takes on the reform of the resistant religious houses within his diocese during the course of 1454, which will have a corollary effect on his reforms of the diocesan clergy. First, his emphasis on the illuminative function of the clergy temporarily drops from view as he concerns himself with their moral conduct and vocational responsibilities. He becomes increasingly aware of disinterest in his reforms amongst the clergy and their unseemly conduct as he undertakes visitation throughout the diocese. Second, the contested monastic reforms of 1454 undoubtedly influence the tenor of his clerical reforms. Between the first and second diocesan synods, he will face resistance from the Brixen Clares, outright failure at St. Georgenberg, and increasing tensions with Sonnenburg. To what degree these problems impact his exact legislative approach to clerical reform remains uncertain. There is no extant documentation from the second synod in November 1454 other than the sermon he delivers there. A clue to his changing disposition toward the diocesan clergy, however, emerges in a pair of sermons he preaches in visitation of the Brixen chapter clergy over a week in Lent 1454. These give insight into his more direct reform of the clergy in visitation and serve as a contrast for the sermon he preaches later that year to the gathered diocesan clergy.

Cusanus would draft an extensive list of questions for use in the visitation. The interrogation addressed matters ranging from clerical responsibilities within the cathedral to clerical behavior to various financial and philanthropic concerns, such as providing for the

indigent.[30] The same basic concerns pervade the visitation homilies. He began the visitation of the Brixen cathedral with an introductory homily the day after Ash Wednesday, taking up the feria day's appointed gospel lesson: the account of Christ healing the centurion's servant in Matthew 8. He first uses the image of the centurion to legitimate his visitation with an appeal to ecclesiastical authority. Just as the centurion has servants under him, so the pontiff is a "father" and his "children" are those subordinate (*subditi*) to him.[31] He is not their "lord," but shares a legation of Christ to them which in turn entails their submission to him. He acts pastorally, not despotically, to those under his charge. Like the centurion, the pontiff has care of those subordinate to him and uses coercion where necessary in order to bring about requisite obedience: "For the laws and statutes, which are raised as a bulwark by pontifical power, have connected penalties in order that obedience might be kept by the fear of the penalties."[32] Then Cusanus presents the visitation, and himself as visitor, in the context of the same centurion and pontifical images. Speaking in the first person, he describes the goal of visitation as the healing of his "sick children." He, like the centurion, "should look after the house" and "find the sick children." As bishop, he uses the "legation" enjoined upon him by Christ and, though he is not "sufficient for this charge" due to his own "incurable infirmity," nonetheless he acts on behalf of the one who commissioned him (*mihi scilicet commissam*).[33] The visitor is commissioned by

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[30] Baum and Senoner, *Nikolaus von Kues als Zeelsorger*, 14–76.

[31] It is entirely possible that Cusanus uses the *pontifex* language in reference to himself as bishop and thus pontiff of Brixen, which would qualify the papal authorization of reform somewhat. Given his direct reference to *adiutores* in describing their cooperation with those under pontifical jurisdiction (*pro cura subditorum*) and a later appeal to his "patron Peter," however, it seems that he has in mind legitimating his visitation as a bishop through recourse to the authority of the bishop of Rome.

[32] "Veniam et curabo eum," *Sermo* 145.1, 13–22 (*fi* XVIII: 108): "Spectat igitur ad subditos pontificis, ut oboediant prout subditi centurionis, qui 'dicit huic vade et alteri veni, et unus vadit et alter venit'. Unde cum pontifex sit 'in potestate constitutes' tunc ad hoc, ut possit proficere in ministerio curae, necessaria est oboedientia et contra inoboedientes coercitio. Leges enim et statuta, quae robur sortiuntur ex potestate pontificali, habent annexas poenas, ut metu poenarum conservetur oboedientia."

[33] "Veniam et curabo eum." *Sermo* 145.5, 1–14 (*fi* XVIII: 109): "Unde cum nunc assit tempus emendationis,

Christ as his legate and he undertakes the visitation in the hope that those under his care as bishop will reform themselves. He turns to the threat of judgment to incite moral action on the part of the clergy. Jesus, he says, promises to come either "in fury and wrath" or "in the spirit of mercy (*lenitatis*)."[34] If they would have him come in the latter, they should "continually follow the disciple of Paul" in judging themselves, lest they be judged by God. This is the goal of visitation (*hoc per viam visitationis convenienter fieri poterit*): as they judge and humble themselves, their faith is increased and they will be saved according to their increased faith.[35] Cusanus presents himself as legate of Christ charged with authority within the diocese placed in his care. Given this office and the right of coercion accorded it, he visits the chapter to encourage their obedience that they might avoid judgment.

The second sermon in visitation of the cathedral chapter comes five days later, this time taking as its text the gospel for the festival of St. Gregory: the Matthew 21 account of Jesus throwing the moneychangers out of the temple. This much longer address immediately precedes the interrogation and therefore is more specific about the vocational responsibilities of the clergy. The primary image he intones again is the legation of Christ, only this time he details specifically Christ's own legation to Jerusalem. He further augments it with another familiar image, that of a

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ego apud me ipsum revolvens crediti officii centurionatus debitum respexi ad domum, et repperi puerum infirmum, et vidi me non sufficere ad curam, converti me ad Christum, cuius legatione utor, exposui sibi infirmitatem per me incurabilem. Et quia ipse est, qui 'se ipsum' pro omnibus mihi commissis 'obtulit in ara crucis', respondit: 'Veniam et curabo', cui dixi: 'Domine, non sum dignus, ut intres' 'in domum meam', mihi scilicet commissam. Si Petrus patronus meus dixit ad te: 'Exi a me, peccator ego sum', multo magis ego tibi supplicare habeo, 'ne ad peccatorem divertas'."

[34] "Veniam et curabo eum," *Sermo* 145.5, 15–19 (*h* XVIII: 109): "Potest igitur iste adventus per Jesum pollicitus esse 'in furore et ira'— 'meremur enim flagella' aut 'in spiritu lenitatis', in 'verbo' scilicet curando, non in cauterio et 'abscisione' putridi membri."

[35] "Veniam et curabo eum," *Sermo* 145.5, 24–33 (*h* XVIII: 109): "Hoc per viam visitationis convenienter fieri poterit. Ibi enim 'nos ipsos iudicabimus' et 'humiliabimur in conspectu Domini', et augebitur fides, 'quia ipse est Dominus, qui fecit nos, et nos oves pascuae eius'. Qui solo verbo creavit omnia, etiam 'tantum dicendo verbo salvabit animas nostras'. Adaucta igitur fide necessario credemus 'nos per fidem salvari', et sic ad nos veniet in spiritu salvans nos secundum fidem."

Jerusalem *permixtum*. Jesus was regarded differently by the people (as a prophet) and by the priests (as a seducer), but this only reflected the goal of his *adventus*: "He came that the blind might see, and the seeing might become blind. For he was the light of grace, who comforted the humble that believed and blinded the presumptuous."[36] Upon arrival, he "did not turn away" but went directly to the "house of his Father," that is, the temple. Likewise should the visitor go to the temple and "show for what and why he came."[37] He then explains the ejection of the moneychangers from the temple, enjoining the clergy present that he must do the same. "Therefore it is fitting, brothers, that the same should be done. For unless 'zeal for the house of the Lord consumes' the prelate and he most strongly and fearlessly applies his hand to the soul after the word, he will not be able to eject moneychangers from the temple like Christ."[38] He then applies the *permixtum* image to distinguish the true ecclesiastics from those present in the temple strictly for their own pecuniary gain. He claims that the moneychangers ejected from the temple were only a beginning (*inchoandum*). Their number would be filled by "simoniacs," who "turn the end of holy things into temporal commodities, who indeed do not seek a place in the temple for any other reason, or they might be the religious or secular clerics or be constituted in holy orders, apart from which they lead an idle and luxurious and rich life, and they are delighted with

[36] "Dies diei eructat verbum," *Sermo* 147.4, 1–14 (*ñ* XVIII: 118): "Et attendamus, quo modo 'civitas commota,' interrogavit, quis legatus ille esset. Populus vero aiebat ipsum 'prophetam esse a Nazareth'. Populus enim eum ut prophetam habuit, sed principes sacerdotum ut 'seductorem'. Illi enim, qui videntes et docti fuerunt habiti, in adventu Christi facti sunt caeci et ignorantes, et pauperes et simplices facti sunt evangelistae. Haec est confessio Christi, qui dixit: 'Confite or tibi Pater', quia 'abscondisti ea a sapientibus et revelasti ea parvulis'. 'Venit, ut caeci viderent videntes autem caeci fierent.' Nam erat lumen gratiae, quod confortabat humiles qui credebant, et excaecabat praesumptuosos."

[37] "Dies diei eructat verbum," *Sermo* 147.5, 4–5 (*ñ* XVIII: 118): "Ita facere debet omnis visitator. Ostendere enim debet, ad quid et cur venit."

[38] "Dies diei eructat verbum," *Sermo* 147.5, 24–28 (*ñ* XVIII: 119): (*ñ* XVIII: 117): "Nam nisi 'zelus domus Domini comedat' praelatum et fortissimo atque imperterrito animo manum apponat post verba, non poterit plus ipse quam Christus eicere negotiatores de temple."

a type of piety like sacred leisure."[39] He opposes confessors who gain profit rather than "attend to the gospel."[40] He then deals with commerce in the church, which relates explicitly to his image of the moneychangers. That which is of business (*negotiationis*) "should be ejected" and "avarice should have no place there, where God is adored." It is "idolatry" because "it prefers the denarius to God."[41] The church, however, is overrun with "hidden thieves" who "plunder pilgrims" seeking salvation. They live not "in dens," but in "churches and altars," and they are "opposed to the temple of God."[42] The genuine *ecclesiasticos*, however, should imitate Christ and restore the reputation of the clergy besmirched by those *latrones*. With that, he directs them to begin the interrogations associated with the visitation.[43]

These two visitation sermons preached to the Brixen cathedral chapter again recall themes from Cusanus's 1454 sermon delivered to the Poor Clares, as well as the sermon later that year in his second visit to Neustift. He presents the visitation in all cases as a personal exercise of his ecclesiastical role as visitor or legate of Christ. He also exhorts the hearers to active obedience

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[39] "Dies diei eructat verbum," *Sermo* 147.6, 10–16 (*h* XVIII: 119): "De quorum numero intellego eos esse, qui propterea simoniaci sunt, quia finem sacrorum convertunt in temporale commodum, qui scilicet non alia de causa in templo locum quaesiverunt, sive sint religiosi sive sint saeculares clerici aut in sacris ordinibus constituti, nisi ut quietam et laetam atque pinguem vitam ducant, et sub pietatis specie quasi in sacro otio delicientur."

[40] "Dies diei eructat verbum," *Sermo* 147.6, 21–23 (*h* XVIII: 119): "Dum essem legatus et ponerem confessors primo non bene attendens ad hoc evangelium, inhibui confessoribus, ne pecuniam sumeret..."

[41] "Dies diei eructat verbum," *Sermo* 147.6, 33–42 (*h* XVIII: 119): "Licet enim ob finem servandi institutionem legis talia animalia pro oblatione venderentur, tamen in templo fieri non debebant. Unde nihil in 'domo orationis' licitum est nisi id solum, propter quod est ipsa domus. Domus Dei, fratres, ab istis omnibus purgari debet, ut ea, quae negotiationis sunt, eiciantur. Avaritia ibi locum non debet habere, ubi Deus debet adorari. Est enim idolatria, quia praefert denarium Deo."

[42] "Dies diei eructat verbum," *Sermo* 147.7 (*h* XVIII: 120): "Verum valde considerandum, quod subditur: 'Vos autem fecistis illam speluncam latronum." Deus habet domum, quam 'vos fecistis speluncam latronum'. Spelunca est receptaculum ad occultandum latrones, qui praetergredientes spoliant. Nonne omnes scimus hoc verissimum esse? Habemus enim ecclesias et altaria, ut viatores, qui ad caelum aspirant, spoliemus de caelo, de inferno, de purgatorio, de passione Christi reliquiis sanctorum. Quid facimus? Nonne omnia sacra sic pro dolor hodie ordinata sunt, ut utile aliquod ex omnibus exspectemus? Quod si deest spes praedae, nonne involuntarii sumus? Respicimus igitur omnes, ut assequamur praedam quasi lactitans latro. Nolumus enim latrones videri seu raptores. Hinc dicimus nos ecclesiasticos. Verbo sumus 'in domo Dei', facto latrones in speluncis. Nemo igitur tantum adversatur templo Dei sicut illi, qui nomen habent quod sint in sortem Dei vocati."

[43] "Dies diei eructat verbum," *Sermo* 147.9 (*h* XVIII: 120).

through submission to authority. In the case of the religious, that involves obedience to the rule, while for the cathedral clergy it entails obedience to ecclesiastical authority as embodied by the visitor. Finally, he divides the hearers into two distinct groups. The religious were a *corpus permixtum* of false (*ficto*) and true (*verus*) monks and nuns, but here Cusanus uses the image of the moneychangers to distinguish the false ecclesiastics, the "thieves and robbers," from those who rightly fulfill their obligations and calling. Generally speaking, however, it reflects the increasing exigency of pastoral reform of a clergy that has failed in those very obligations. Most noteworthy in his approach to clerical reform at this stage is that he does not reference in either visitation sermon the illuminative role of the clergy, nor anything else pertinent to the Dionysian hierarchies.[44] He concerns himself almost exclusively with providing a rationale for the visitation and standards for interrogation and reform.

The second synodal homily, delivered November 19, 1454, bears very few apparent similarities with the more abrasive visitation sermons. They are different in tone and content, yet at the same time they reflect a common concern: the need of the clergy to fulfill their vocational obligations. The subject of the sermon changes from that of a visitor conducting visitation under a commission and legation from Christ to the diocesan clergy imitating Paul in his care for the church at Philippi. The sermon itself amounts to an extended exposition of Philippians 1–3. He opens by addressing the gathered clergy as the "consecrated and commissioned" (*consacerdotes et comministri*), then enjoins them to attend to the epistle since they are "successors" of the apostles of whom "they ought to be imitators."[45] The fact that he specifically refers to the

[44] These sermons call to mind Cusanus's earlier apologies for the capricious authority of the papacy, whether in his advocacy for Eugenius IV (*Oratio coram Dieta Francfordiensi*, *Dialogus concludens Amedistarum errrorem*) during the Basel controversy or in his later letters to the Bohemians (*Contra Bohemos*). These texts are available with parallel English translation in Izbicki, *Writings on Church and Reform*, 162–259, 272–333, and 356–429.

[45] "Tantum digne," *Sermo* 164.2, 1–5 (*fi* XVIII: 197). "Si igitur esse debemus imitatores apostolorum, quia successores eorum sumus, attendamus epistulam, quam legimus, quo modo se Paulus doctor gentium habuit."

diocesan clergy as successors of the apostles indicates a subtle shift toward his later identification of the lower ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy as representative of the magisterial teaching office. He then uses the text to detail different ways the clergy should imitate Paul. They should rejoice as Paul did when he was in chains and consider themselves "necessary for the people" as Paul did when he desired to remain in the body for the sake of the Philippians. For the Brixen clergy, this amounts to visiting and instructing those under their care.[46] He urges them to be more obedient in the absence of prelates than in their presence and tells them above all to embody Paul in striving for blessedness as he did.[47]

In the second half of the sermon, he resumes language of imitation in discussion of Philippians 3:17 and the Pauline exhortation to "be imitators of me" (*imitatores mei estote*)—a phrase that will feature prominently in the Roman reforms.[48] This applies to any potential suffering, which itself serves to proclaim Christ:

> First we, who are called to the apostolate that we might proclaim Christ, should "rejoice," if for the sake of defending the gospel, we might suffer chains, since chains serve the proclamation of Christ. For if we suffer because of the gospel, we give testimony to the truth of the chains. And this is the defense of the gospel. So the martyrs, who are called witnesses in Greek, are the exaltation of the gospel. And when we suffer because of the gospel, we proclaim Christ, "whether by occasion, or by truth," as he declares in the beginning of the epistle.[49]

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[46] "Tantum digne," *Sermo* 164.2, 56–66 (*fi* XVIII: 197): "Et est advertendum quod si aliquis confidit se populo necessarium, ille scire debet quoruam quamdiu necessarius permanebit, ut ait hic Paulus: 'Et hoc confidens scio quoniam manebo, et permanebo omnibus vobis ad profectum vestrum et ad gaudium vesttae fidei' etc. Postquam autem nos talem fiduciam habemus, quod 'sumus necessarii populo', tunc ipsum visitare debemus et ipsum instruere, ut 'digne in evangelio Christi conversetur', prout in themate."

[47] "Tantum digne," *Sermo* 164.3 (*fi* XVIII: 198).

[48] This sermon is apparently a collation of two different sermons, likely both delivered on the same day and to the same audience at the 1454 synod. The exact relation and liturgical context of the respective sermons, however, is not known.

[49] "Tantum digne," *Sermo* 164.6, 2–12 (*fi* XVIII: 200): "Primo quo modo nos, qui ad apostolatum vocati sumus, ut Christum annuntiemus, 'gaudere', debemus, si pro defensione evangelii patimur vincula, quia vincula serviunt annuntiationi Christi. Si enim patimur propter evangelium, perhibemus testimonium vinculati veritati. Et haec est defensio evangelii. Sic martyria, quae Graece testimonia dicuntur, sunt evangelii exaltatio. Et dum patimur propter evangelium, annuntiatur Christus, 'sive per caritatem, sive occasionem', ut ipse declarat in primordio epistulae."

The clergy endure persecution because the persecution itself is a form of proclamation. If they suffer for the sake of the priesthood, then they proclaim Christ. Furthermore, the motivation for enduring such persecution is their responsibility to the faithful they serve. As Paul was willing to wait for his final departure (*moram dissolutionis*) for the sake of the people, so too should the Brixen clergy patiently wait for theirs because those to whom they minister are in need of instruction.[50] He cites in particular the *exemplum* of St. Martin of Tours: "we, who follow the apostles, should be moved so much for the salvation of the people entrusted to us, that though desiring nothing more than 'to be with Christ,' we should patiently delay, like the blessed Martin, true successor of the apostles, said: 'Lord, if I am needed by your people, then your will be done'."[51] Two significant developments occur in this sermon that bear mention. First, though he still does not make reference to the illuminative function, he does identify instruction as a central component of diocesan clerical responsibilities. Second, he speaks more explicitly of the clerical obligation for the pastoral care of the flock entrusted to them. These two themes will evolve into a more robust *christiform* notion of preaching and pastoral care by the final diocesan synod, when he uses the image of Christ as Good Shepherd to underscore both the christological content of *christiform* preaching and the *christiform* concern the clergy should show for the faithful.

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[50] "Tantum digne," *Sermo* 164.7, 1–10 (*fi* XVIII: 200): "Secunda hauriamus ex epistula, quod ad nos spectat, qui Christum annuntiamus, tantam fidem habere de his, quae praedicamus de vita fidelium, quae abscondita est in Christo, quod quantum in nobis est, cupiamus semper 'dissolve et esse cum Christo'. Sed propter illos, quibus nostra instructio est necessaria, patienter ferre debemus motam dissolutionis, ita ut vivere et mori apud nos nihil differat propter Christum, licet mori melius nobis sit simpliciter."

[51] "Tantum digne," *Sermo* 164.8, 1–8 (*fi* XVIII: 201): "Notare habemus etiam, quod nos, qui succedimus apostolis, intantum ad salutem populi nobis crediti affici debemus, quod etiam 'cum Christo esse', quo nihil felicius, patienter differre debemus, uti beatus Martinus verus apostolorum successor aiebat: 'Domine, si adhuc populo tuo sum necessarius, fiat voluntas tua'."

The three sermons Cusanus preaches to gathered clergy in March and November of 1454 provide important signposts in his development and represent interesting contrasts in their own right. All three share a common emphasis on fulfilling pastoral obligations—a concern not expressed in the earliest synodal address. With the visitation sermons, that takes the shape of confrontation, interrogation, even the threat of punitive action; with the synodal sermon, it is an exhortation to imitate Paul in his instruction, sufferings, and pastoral care. Part of that contrast could owe itself to the differing occasions, the first two in visitation and the third in synod. It also could have resulted from the series of crises and failures he encountered over the course of that year to the point that he began considering resignation as bishop. Whatever might best account for the differences in approach between March and November, the central concern remains the same. The bishop is still searching for a way to relate the pastoral obligations of his diocesan clergy to the salvation of the faithful so that the clergy themselves see the corresponding result of their pastoral care. He finds it in the *christiformitas* image.

1455 Synodal Sermon

The opportunity to offer the Brixen clergy a more christological interpretation of their tasks presents itself in the third diocesan synod, convened November 1455. The primary goal of the synodal regulations there was the reform of the liturgy. Cusanus revised the diocesan missal and the liturgical calendar to eliminate the more superstitious festival days and to decrease the number of festivals that would exempt the people from work.[52] In addition to this, and presumably in response to an undocumented request at the 1454 synod, he provided an order of visitation for parochial churches in the diocese. Featuring ninety-eight questions, it was loosely

[52] Bett, *Nicholas of Cusa*, 52; Hürten, *Akten zur Reform*, 53; and Vansteenberghe, *Cardinal Nicolas de Cues*, 142.

based on a rite produce by Jean Gerson.[53] One might expect the synodal homily to deal with these same moral and ecclesiastical issues, but in fact he takes an entirely different approach. By the time he preaches to the clergy at the third diocesan synod, the concept of *christiformitas* has begun to take chief place in his reform ideas. This synodal homily also conveys anew his Dionysian concept of the clergy as means for illumination of the faithful. The idea, predominant within the first synodal homily and absent subsequent to it, returns in conjunction with the motif of *christiformitas* when discussing the relationship between clerical instruction from the Scriptures and the ascent of the faithful toward mystical union with Christ.

Prior to this, Cusanus had suggested some of these ideas during a visitation of the Brixen parochial church in July 1455. After a particularly vociferous excoriation of the parochial church a week earlier, the bishop returned for a short homily the next Sunday. There he makes recourse to his running distinction between two types of clergy: false prophets who deliver lies because they are from the prince of darkness and preachers who declare the truth publicly that they have come to know through private study and revelation.[54] He cites numerous clerical abuses, such as mendicants who profited off reforms in Cologne, misuses of the confessional for monetary gain, usurious practices, and the like. Contrasting the "heretics" and "liars" with Christ and his disciples, he claims that the latter seek the salvation of the faithful, while the former are duplicitous in their intentions and fallacious in their speech.[55] The latter bring about "caritative

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[53] Hürten, *Akten zur Reform*, 51.

[54] "Qui facit voluntatem Patris me, qui in caelis est, ipse intrabit in regnum caelorum," *Sermo* 197A.2, 13–24 (*fi* XVIII: 420): "Id quod falsum et mendosum est, est de regione principis tenebrarum. Nam falsum fugit lucem et non vult cognosd, quia falsum; ideo sub specie boni et veri se occultat. Sed verum est de regione principis Iuds. Verbum Dei lux est et veritas; ideo publice et super tecta mandatur praedicari, etiam si in secreta recipitur per studium seu revelationem. Malignus spiritus mendax est ab initio et verbum eius illusorium, quo magi et nigromantici atque incantatores imbuuntur, in occultis et latebris praedicatur et fugit lucem."

[55] "Qui facit voluntatem Patris me, qui in caelis est, ipse intrabit in regnum caelorum," *Sermo* 197A.5, 27–30 (*fi* XVIII: 422): "Falsus autem contrario se habet modo. Vide, quomodo doctrina Christi est simplex et simplices sunt discipuli eius. Sed antichristi duplices et fallaces."

union" and edification of the church, the former schism and division.[56] This visitation sermon brings to light an important shift occurring in Cusanus's reform thought regarding the clergy as a *sacerdotium permixtum*. Whereas in his second synodal homily, the "simoniacs" and the "thieves and robbers" were merely intermingled with the other ecclesiastics, now they have a concomitant effect upon the church. The "false prophets" and "heretics" and "liars" produce schism and division, not edification and unity.

Cusanus will parlay this concept in his third synodal homily through the use of *christiformitas* as the nexus between the illuminative function of the clergy and the salvation of the faithful. The third synod took place from November 25 to November 27 and the bishop opened the proceedings with his homily on St. Katherine's. First, he recalls the Dionysian role of the clergy as illuminative and applies it to preaching. The goal of the clergy is to make sensible the spirit hidden in the letter of Scripture. "So the apostle separates preachers into those who speak with their understanding in the church and those who speak with the tongue." The preacher who speaks with understanding "instructs and feeds," but the one who speaks with tongues "does not edify, since his voice is not alive because it lacks the spirit of understanding."[57] This understanding is not "a spirit of human understanding," but "a spirit of divine wisdom." Only

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[56] "Qui facit voluntatem Patris me, qui in caelis est, ipse intrabit in regnum caelorum," *Sermo* 197A.6, 3–12 (*h* XVIII: 423): "Qui igitur pungunt fructus dulces caritatis non producunt, qui sunt fructus unionis, sed fructus scissionis et dispersionis et schismatis. Unde 'lupi rapaces' non aedificant ecclesiam, quae consistit in caritativa unione. Illi duo fructus, scilicet 'uvae et ficus', magis humanam nuttiunt vitam inter omnes fructus qui habentur ob dulcedinem, quia dulce nutrit et quandam proportionem ad humanem habent speciem."

[57] "Unde ememus panes, ut munducat hii?" *Sermo* 207.2, 1–18 (*h* XIX: 13): "Sic apostolus distinguit praedicatores in eos, qui sensu suo in ecclesia loquuntur, et eos, qui lingua loquuntur. Nam qui sensu suo loquuntur quinque verba, plus instruunt quam qui decem milia verba loquuntur in lingua, ut Paulus de se Corinthiis testatur. Unde loqui suo sensu est ex intellectu proprio proferre verbum vitae. Illud instruit et cibat; cum gustu enim saporoso emittitur et recipitur. Dulcedo etenim atque suavitas, quam sentit proferens in suo intellectu, prolationi verborum conectitur, ut cum aviditate capiatur. Et ob hoc viva vox, scilicet quae ex intellectu docentis foris emittitur docet, quia imprimitur mediante salsa latentis energiae. Sed qui aliena lingua loquitur, non aedificat, quia vox illius non est viva, cum ei desit spiritus intelligentiae."

those who have "tasted and seen that the Lord is good" have the spirit of wisdom.[58] Through the presence of the "living voice of the spirit of wisdom," the clergy preach with an "inflamed eloquence" (*eloquium ignitum*). In order for this eloquence to be ignited, one must follow its igniter (*seminator)*, Jesus.[59] The central attribute of the clergy's instruction is its christological source.

That return to the source implies an imitation of Christ. He expresses this in the idiom of the text for the day, the feeding of the five thousand in John 6, where Jesus commands the apostles Philip and Andrew to feed the people. The bread Jesus distributes is the "food of life" (*pabulum vitae*). The preacher who has these words of life, but does not distribute them "labors in vain." The ability to feed the people depends upon the imitation of Christ as exemplar for the cleric. When Jesus distributed the words of life, he did so for the Father's glory, not his own. Those who preach for their own "glory or avarice" do not in fact "refresh the multitude." On the contrary, they detract from their "edification."[60] The cleric should imitate Christ in order to bring about the proper effect of his preaching. "Therefore let us strive, most beloved, we who are pastors of the flock of the Lord, to be like Jesus alone, who distributed the word of life, that we

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[58] "Unde ememus panes, ut munducat hii?" *Sermo* 207.3, 1–11 (*ñ* XIX: 14): "Arbitror autem in ecclesia vivam vocem non solum illam esse, quae animata est spiritu humanae intelligentiae, sed spiritu divinae sapientiae. De quo dicitur, quod 'cibat pane vitae et intellectus et potat aqua sapientiae'. Hoc autem interest inter unum spiritum et alium; nam spiritus sapientiae est spiritus sapidae scientiae, qui est spiritus, quo zelum habens secundum scientiam movetur. Quem non potest habere nisi ille, qui 'gustavit et vidit, quoniam suavis est Dominus'."

[59] "Unde ememus panes, ut munducat hii?" *Sermo* 207.4, 1–5 (*ñ* XIX: 14): "Unde vox viva spiritu sapientiae est eloquium ignitum. Immo vehementer necesse est, ut sit ignitum, si voluerit seminator Christum sequi, qui aiebat: 'Veni ignem mittere in terram; quid volo nisi ut ardeat'."

[60] "Unde ememus panes, ut munducat hii?" *Sermo* 207.7, 1–18 (*ñ* XIX: 15): "Hoc igitur est, quod series evangelii exprimit: Iesum distribuere pabulum vitae. Quo non distribuente, qui habet verba vitae aeternae, in vanum laboratur. Tunc autem Iesus distribuit, quando glorificatur Pater caelestis et praedicator secure dicere potest: 'Ego gloriam meam non quaero', sed glorifico Patrem, et sicut mandatum mihi dedit Pater, sic facio. Si vana gloria distribuit verbum pascentiae aut avaritia, non reficitur multitude.Vanitas enim propriae gloriae aut habendi cupiditas adulterant verbum Dei. Et tunc etiam multiloquium non proderit ad paucorum aedificationem. Sed ubi est caritas Iesu, pauca verba ampliantur in cordibus et usque ad abundantiam, immo ad superabundantiam fructificant."

fisherman (*rudes*) might put before the people bread for [their] cultivation."[61] By imitating Christ as preachers, they enable the hearers to become *christform* and attain salvation:

> Thus Jesus distributes when he lights our lives *christiformiter*, indeed in good works, so that we might be perfect imitators of Christ, who is the "light of the world." For if life is the example of the word of God, as [it was] in Jesus, who did what he taught, then Christ distributes [it]. Christ is the word of God. The word of God distributes himself. Every word distributed from the core multiplies through the ears of those who hear. But that one alone, who is received as the word of God since he is that absolute truth, feeds and vivifies the intellectual nature even to the end of blessedness by distributing and multiplying himself.[62]

Several uses of *christiformitas* come together in this instance. It describes the works performed in pursuing a formed faith, the role these works play in the individual's filiation, and the result of these works in eternal blessedness—the means, goal, and end of salvation, so to speak. The imitation of Christ in good works provoked by the preaching leads the hearer to filiation. Though the hearers as sinners are not sons of God by nature, but "sons of wrath," the grace given in preaching enables them to imitate Christ in good works and receive adoption as sons. The clergy then imitate Christ in their preaching that the preaching might result in salvation for the faithful: "Therefore let us strive, most beloved, to imitate Christ as he has shined on us, and distribute to the flock the commission with our words, that they might bear fruit unto salvation."[63]

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[61] "Unde ememus panes, ut munducat hii?" *Sermo* 207.7, 25–28 (*ñ* XIX: 15): "Studeamus igitur, dilectissimi, qui pastores sumus gregis dominici, Iesum esse solum qui distribuit verbum vitae, quod nos rudes in hordeaceo pane populo proponimus."

[62] "Unde ememus panes, ut munducat hii?" *Sermo* 207.8, 1–14 (*ñ* XIX: 16): "Tunc Iesus distribuit, quando lucet vita nostra christiformiter, scilicet in bonis operibus, sicut perfecti imitatores Christi, qui est 'lux mundi'. Si enim vita est exemplum verbi Dei, prout in Iesu, qui id quod fecit docuit, tunc Christus distribuit. Christus est verbum Dei. Verbum Dei se ipsum distribuit. Omne verbum ex integro se distribuendo multiplicat per aures audientium. Sed solum illud, quod recipitur ut verbum Dei, quoniam illud est ipsa veritas absoluta, distribuendo se et multiplicando pascit intellectualem naturam et vivificat eam atque felicitate."

[63] "Unde ememus panes, ut munducat hii?" *Sermo* 207.11, 1–24 (*ñ* XIX: 16): "Ille autem appellatur proprie Dei Filius, 'qui peccatum non fecit, nec est inventus dolus in ore eius'. Nam, ut ait Iohannes in Canonica sua, 'omnis, qui natus est ex Deo non peccat', sed generatio Dei conservat eum, et malignus non tanget eum. Et Iesus dicit illum esse fratrem suum, 'qui fecerit voluntatem Patris sui, qui in caelis est'. Unde cum peccatores, qui sunt 'natura filii irae', possunt pervenire ad filiationem Dei, hinc hoc solum fiet per gratiam. Iesus autem numquam fuit filius irae, sed pacis illius quae Deus est. Unde ipse natura Filius Dei est, et eius fratres fiunt filii, per adoptionis gratiam scilicet conversi, qui fecerint voluntatem Patris caelestis sicut et ipse, qui manet in dilectione Patris, quia mandatum eius servat. Ad regnum igitur dilectionis Filii sui Deus peccatores admittit, qui Christum Filium suum dilectum

Moreover, the clergy are not only conveyers of illumination that leads to salvation, but recipients in their own right. Cusanus interprets the five pieces of bread and the two fish allegorically to correspond to the medieval estates. The five pieces of bread refer to the five senses. Adults receive preaching with a childlike faith (*innocentia puerilis*) and seize the object presented in the sermon with their five senses. Through the objects preached, they mortify the members of their flesh in the work of their hands and in the purity of their hearts.[64] The two fish, on the other hand, symbolize the intellect and the will. A childlike faith precedes intellectual reason and forms the intellect and the will. He then applies this distinct image to the respective lay and clerical estates: "Therefore the Christian is fed with a perfect nourishment of the active life in those loaves of bread and the comtemplative life in those two fish."[65] This essentially provides two different descriptions of conformity to Christ. The active life, applicable to laity, is conformity through good works and a pure heart. The contemplative life, ostensibly applicable to both the regular and the secular clergy, is a higher conformity in the intellect and the will. The exemplar for the latter is Christ, whom the clergy are called to emulate. He is the "innocent lamb...in whom no deceit was found in intellect and emotion, but the purest innocence, which any Christian who maximally represents him on earth should have, so should we who are shepherds of the flock of the Lord imitate [him]."[66] The clergy not only imitate Christ in order

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imitantur. Studeamus igitur, dilectissimi, Christum imitari, ita ut ipse in nobis luceat et verba nostra commisso gregi distribuat, ut fructificent in salutem."

[64] "Unde ememus panes, ut munducat hii?" *Sermo* 207.12 (*h* XIX: 17).

[65] "Unde ememus panes, ut munducat hii?" *Sermo* 207.13, 7–14 (*h* XIX: 17–18): "Ubi enim est innocentia non solum in sensibus, sed in omni discursu syllogistico et post omnem discursum in intellectu et voluntate, ibi est vera pascentia. Nam ille intellectus veraciter pascitur, qui sola veritate pascitur. Christianus igitur pascitur perfecta pascentia vitae activae illis panibus hordeaceis et vitae contemplativae duobus piscibus."

[66] "Unde ememus panes, ut munducat hii?" *Sermo* 207.15, 17–26 (*h* XIX: 18): "Christus ob hoc a Iohanne dictus est agnus Dei. Agnus ab agnoscendo, quia innocens agnus sive in agnoscendo innocens. In agno pulchritudo innocentiae naturalis amoris ad matrem relucet, quam in voce cognoscit et sequitur. Unde Christus est, in quo in intellectu et affectu non reperitur dolus sed purissima innocentia, quem quisque christianus, maxime qui eius vices in terris agit, uti sumus nos dominici gregis pastores, imitari debemus."

that the faithful might attain salvation through their preaching, but that they might likewise participate in that salvation by conforming their intellect and will to him.

Cusanus makes two moves in this synodal homily that will carry through the rest of his reform sermons. First, he recovers the illuminative role of the priesthood, which receded after the first synodal homily. Second, he offers a concrete link between this illumination and the salvation of the faithful in the concept of *christiformitas*. The clergy mediate the object for that conformity in the preaching of Christ. Through the object mediated, the faithful receive Christ according to their own estate, believe, and conform themselves to him in good works. The faithful become *christiform*, but only when and where the clergy unveil the Christ hidden under the letter of Scripture for their imitation. This follows from the broader Dionysian framework of salvation that Cusanus applies to ecclesiology and now personal reform. The clergy play an instrumental role in mediating the knowledge of Christ downward to the faithful so that the faithful might ascend upward toward mystical union with Christ through their conformity to him. Where the clergy are "heretics," "liars," or "false prophets," the object of conformity is not made available to the faithful; where they are *christiform* in their preaching, the faithful can conform to the Christ revealed to them. At root, *christiformitas* here plays the Dionysian hierarchical functions of both imitating divinity in order to participate in it and perfecting the individual in response to purgation and illumination. To this point in Cusanus's clerical reform, however, he has not yet turned *christiformitas* into a constructive proposal for pastoral care or for the reform of their specific vocational obligations, but only suggested the way forward.

1457 Synodal Sermon

As with the monastic visitation sermons, the year 1456 represented an extended delay in Cusanus's active preaching of clerical reform due to a period of intense conflict within the diocese. His plan of annual diocesan synods was interrupted that same year. Some have

suggested it was due to the problems of winter travel in the snowy Alpine region.[67] There were other plausible reasons. The debate with the Brixen cathedral chapter over its vacant prebend had escalated in May 1456, leading to the excommmunication of four canons, and was not resolved until November—the same month when Cusanus had convened the previous two synods. That controversy no doubt could have caused him to delay the impending assembly. Another possibility was concern over attendance. This would come to the fore in the ensuing synod, which stipulated mandatory attendance at the convocations under pain of excommunication. The legislation was aimed specifically at George Riedt, the Cistercian abbot of Stams, who declined participation in the 1455 synod without sending a representative and would subsequently be excommunicated for not attending the 1457 synod.[68] In conjunction with the delayed Neustift visitation, these all give good reason to believe the absence of a 1456 synod had to do with opposition to the bishop on numerous fronts and would force him to redouble his efforts. The extended time in Brixen preaching regularly to his cathedral constituents also gave him the space to further develop his Dionysian-influenced concept of *christiformitas* for application to clerical reform.

When the fourth synod finally convened in May 1457, the statutes revolved around ecclesiastical jurisdiction. In addition to mandatory attendance at the synods, it also enforced the purchase and use of the missal and calendar authorized by the 1455 synod and instituted the system of chapter meetings to be held at Brixen, Innichen, and Wilten, each under the direction of a canon who would report to Cusanus.[69] The fact that the synod met on the Monday of

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[67] Bett, *Nicholas of Cusa*, 52; Tillinghast, "Nicholas of Cusa vs. Sigmund," 381; and Vansteenberghe, *Cardinal Nicolas de Cues*, 143.

[68] Pavlac, "Curse of Cusanus," 209.

[69] Bett, *Nicholas of Cusa*, 52; Hürten, *Akten zur Reform*, 63; and Vansteenberghe, *Cardinal Nicolas de Cues*, 143.

Misericordia Domini, on the other hand, provided the bishop with a fortuitous opportunity to address the clergy in more pastoral terms. In this longest sermon of his Brixen tenure, he uses the previous Sunday's gospel lesson—the Good Shepherd in John 10—as pretext to combine *christiformitas* as image for pastoral reform with the given biblical image for the day, Christ as the Good Shepherd. He had preached one earlier Good Shepherd sermon, delivered at the 1456 festival of dedication for the parochial church in Bruneck. There he laid down the essential line of interpretation he would follow at the fourth synod. The first half of the Bruneck sermon deals with familiar themes of spiritual understanding through the Spirit and suffering as an imitation of the Good Shepherd who died for the sheep, but the second half features a more concentrated analysis of the clerical office, including that of the bishop. The sheep have wandered and gone astray because they are still in the darkness of their ignorance. The bishop, however, is the shepherd who gathers them out of the darkness and leads them into the fold. They enter through the door of Christ and feed on the word, where all the intellectual treasures are hidden. In this, the bishop is a good shepherd who represents Christ (*vices Christi agit*), though he is not the Good Shepherd himself.[70] Cusanus then makes a distinction between Christ as the Good Shepherd and mercenaries or hirelings. The hireling comes for his own gain and readily flees adversity, but the Good Shepherd is like a father who stays to protect his adopted sons, even giving his life for them. All pastors are messengers (*nuntii*) and legates of the Good Shepherd.[71]

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[70] "Eratis aliquando oves errantes," *Sermo* 231.11–12 (*h* XIX: 176).

[71] "Eratis aliquando oves errantes," *Sermo* 231.13, 1–14, 11 (*h* XIX: 177): "Mercenarius autem quia mercenarius et non pastor, facit ut mercenarius, qui non venit ut pasceret, sed suam commoditatem assequeretur; igitur fugit adversitate veniente. Dicit: 'cuius non sunt oves propriae'. Non est nisi unus pastor, cuius sunt oves propriae, qui animam suam dedit pro ipsis, qui est pastor bonus, cuius omnes pastores sunt nuntii, ut faciant sicut ipse, qui aiebat: 'Sicut misit me Pater ita mitto vos'. Mercenarius non est legatus Christi, quia propter Christum non venit, sed propter se ipsum seu mercedem propriam. Oves non sunt propriae illius, sed mercedem propriam habet. Mercenarius lupo veniente fugit. Non fugit pater veniente adversario filii, minus mater, quae cer tior est ipsum esse suum proprium filium, minime pastor animarum, qui ut suum in Christo regeneratum filium a diabolo rapi non sinit, et iam si corpus suum pro eo tradere deberet. Caritas proximi sic fieri exigit."

As the Son was sent to give knowledge of the Father, so all shepherds under him do likewise, though Christ remains the head of the church with all pastors under him.[72] Thus, the Good Shepherd is legate from the Father and the priesthood offers pastoral care under him and for him as his nuncios.

The synodal homily changes none of the basic imagery regarding the Good Shepherd, but uses it for a different purpose. Rather than explaining the role of the clergy to the laity, he now addresses the clergy themselves and explains the pastoral responsibilities they have to the laity. The sermon conflates all three emphases from his earlier synodal homilies—the illuminative function of the priesthood, the reform of the clergy to fulfill their vocational obligations, and *christiformitas* as metaphor for clerical reform—into a coherent picture revolving around the image of the Good Shepherd, whom the cleric should imitate in order to be a *christiform* pastor.[73] In a brief exordium, he cautions shepherds against seeking pastures other than their own, but to care for those to whom Christ has led them. Then he combines his illuminative metaphor for salvation with his notion of a *sacerdotium permixtum* to distinguish clergy still in blindness from those illuminated by the light of Christ. The "presumptuous have blinded themselves to the knowledge of understanding" and do not "allow themselves" to receive illumination, so they lead others like "seducers" and "thieves and robbers."[74] The Good Shepherd is the door and he is

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[72] "Eratis aliquando oves errantes," *Sermo* 231.15 (*h* XIX: 177).

[73] Throughout, Cusanus seems to equivocate almost intentionally between the referent for the shepherd (*pastor*) in the text: at times it is Jesus, at times it is the clergy, and at times it is both. The critical edition of the sermons includes no capitalization of *pastor bonus*. For purposes of clarity, where the metaphor refers to Christ, shepherd is capitalized; where it does not, either referring explicitly to the clergy or ambiguously to both, shepherd is not capitalized.

[74] "Ego sum pastor bonus," *Sermo* 280.3, 1–11 (*h* XIX: 585): "Praesumentes vero se lucem intelligentiae habere excaecat, quia peccatum in illis manet. Nam praesumptio non sinit eos accedere, ut illuminentur, quando se videntes esse iactant. Et quoniam Pharisaei et pastores aliorum praesumentes se videntes alios ducere nitebantur lumine suae intelligentiae, subiungit Christus, quod ipsi tales sunt seductores, quia 'non intrant per ostium'. Dat exemplum de pastore ovium qui per ostium intrat ad ovile, fures vero et latrones aliunde ascendant."

apprehended by his voice. The sheep enter that door and live abundantly, and they are the ones to whom Christ has led the shepherds, who are already illuminated by Christ themselves. The others, again, are "thieves and robbers." He then applies this distinction to the illuminative function of the clergy, using *christiformitas* as an attribute of those clergy who imitate the Good Shepherd in their particular estate. He cites a passage from Jeremiah 3 that prophesied of *christiform* shepherds who would feed the people:

> Therefore [Jesus] said: "Behold I am the door, if anyone enters through me, he will be saved, and he will come in and go out and will find pasture. The liar does not come, other than to plunder and slaughter and destroy. I come, that they might have life and have it abundantly." Therefore we have in the prophecy of Jeremiah 3 *christiform* shepherds who feed in knowledge and truth and that therefore we shepherds, if we seek to feed those sheep entrusted to us, should lead them into the meadow of Holy Scripture, and through this door that is Christ; for it is truly entered through Christ, of whom the Scriptures speak.[75]

He places the emphasis not on the illuminative function as an authoritative declaration, but on its role in leading the faithful to Christ through the Scriptures. The *christiform* shepherd leads the faithful to Christ by revealing the words of life hidden in "the meadows of Holy Scripture."

He employs *christiformitas* likewise to describe the christological content of preaching using the image of Jesus as the door. He again describes certain shepherds as thieves and robbers, who teach a way other than Christ and thus "spurn the doctrine of Christ."[76] The *christiform* clergy, however, preach Christ "that he might be known." Though Jesus himself says that only the Father knows the Son and only the Son knows the Father, nonetheless "they are both known by revelation."[77] That revelation comes in the form of the "door of humanity"

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[75] "Ego sum pastor bonus," *Sermo* 280.5, 1–12 (*ñ* XIX: 586): "Dixit igitur sic: 'Ego sum ostium, per me si quis introierit, salvabitur, et ingredietur et egredietur et pascua inveniet. Fur non venit, nisi ut furetur et mactet et perdat. Ego veni, ut vitam habeant et abundantius habeant.' Habemus igitur iuxta vaticinium Ieremiae 30 pastores christiformes pascere in scientia et doctrina et quod ideo nos pastores, si quaerimus pascere creditas nobis oves, in prata sacrae scripturae eas ducere debemus, et hoc per ostium quod Christus est; nam verus introitus est per Christum, de quo loquuntur scripturae."

[76] "Ego sum pastor bonus," *Sermo* 280.8 (*ñ* XIX: 586).

[77] "Ego sum pastor bonus," *Sermo* 280.13, 1–22 (*ñ* XIX: 588): "Diceret aliquis ex simplicioribus: Quomodo

(*ostium humanitatis*). Through Christ's humanity his divinity is accessible and all the virtues included therein. Thus, the clergy are charged with preaching Christ because he is the door, not only through which humanity attains divinity, but through which one actually comes to know the divine Christ as Son of God, the same way Peter did in his confession. Furthermore, Christ reveals himself in "preaching, doctrine, and the commandments" so that those who receive him "through a formed faith," obey his "teachings and commandments," and look to him as "exemplar" will in turn be "conformed to him and possess blessedness with him."[78] The *christiform* clergy preach Jesus as the door to salvation and in so doing provide the faithful an exemplar for their own obedience, that they might conform to him and form their faith through obedience until they receive eternal blessedness. Cusanus here continues the relationship established in the third synodal homily between the illuminative function of the priesthood in the Dionysian hierarchy and the salvation of the faithful through *christiformitas*. Now, however, he has applied it more prescriptively to the clergy in terms of fulfilling their vocational obligations to reveal Christ to the faithful: *christiform* clergy preach *christiform* sermons that create a *christiform* faithful.

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debemus evangelizare Christum, ut cognoscatur, cum ipse dicat, quod nemo cognoscit Filium nisi Pater et nemo cognoscit Patrem nisi Filius? Respondeo, quod per ostium humanitatis debemus ipsum evangelizare, ut ad cognitionem eius nostros subditos perducamus. Quae cognitio est fides in nobis illa, quae sufficit nobis ad salutem. Nam Deus Pater etsi non potest cognosci uti est nisi per Filium – nemo enim Patrem ut Patrem cognoscit nisi Filius, et nemo cognoscit Filium ut Filium nisi Pater –, tamen Pater et Filius cognoscuntur revelatione fidei. Si enim pervenerimus, ut Christum Filium Dei habeamus per fidem, ipse nobis revelat Patrem. Ad hoc autem ostium habemus humanitatis, quia dum ea quae Christus homo gessit, inspexerimus, reperiemus in homine virtutem divinam supra omnem hominem, ex quibus sibi credimus, in eo enim quod se dicebat Filium Dei esse et missum Patris. Testimonia enim efficacissima atque certissima produxit, ita quod nemo in hoc haesitare potest, qui ratione utitur."

[78] "Ego sum pastor bonus," *Sermo* 280.15, 1–13 (*h* XIX: 588): "Deinde convertimur ad evangelizationem, doctrinam et mandata ipsius Filii Dei et quo modo aperuit scripturas, quia ostendit se esse illum, de quo loquuntur scripturae, et quomodo recipiendo ipsum per fidem formatam, oboediendo doctrinae et praeceptis eius et respiciendo ad ipsum tamquam ad exemplar viae nostrae sperare debemus sibi conformari et beatitudinem secum possidere. Et ita est Christus evangelizandus ut praemittitur. Tunc si creditur Filius Dei, ratio concludit sibi credendum et quod sicut docuit oboediendum et quod via sua est forma omnium ad aeternam vitam tendentium."

The final two sections in the homily are continuous expositions of the Good Shepherd pericope from John 10. Having applied *christiformitas* to clerical preaching, Cusanus now moves on to questions of jurisdiction in the second section. He again uses the *christiformitas* image, but in this context relates it to pastoral care through the Good Shepherd metaphor. A *christiform* shepherd embodies the virtue of Christ, the Good Shepherd himself. Christ is both Good Shepherd and head of the church's mystical body. Mixing metaphors, Cusanus says that the Good Shepherd gave his life so the sheep might be fed.[79] He then makes recourse again to the clergy *permixtum* idea. Some clergy fail to sacrifice themselves for the sheep, in part because they do not know them. He again picks up the Johannine contrast between hireling and Good Shepherd. Cusanus claims that many among them "neglect the sheep," are "unwilling to suffer for them," and fail to "feed the sheep by word and example."[80] The one who imitates the Good Shepherd, on the other hand, chooses to do what he must pastorally, even if it has personal consequences. What Cusanus finds in the diocese are "few pastors," but "many more hirelings."[81] It is difficult not to entertain the notion that this is autobiographical on the part of the beleaguered bishop. Such hirelings do not know their sheep, nor are they "moved" (*affici*) by those under their care. The shepherd should have the relationship of a parent to a child, yet he instead "kills them" with a "wicked vice and example" and by "flattery and complacency" in order to gain for himself temporal wealth: "There is nothing more horrible, brothers, than that many who are complacent absolve from grave allurements, not being aggravating, but being

[79] "Ego sum pastor bonus," *Sermo* 280.20–21 (*h* XIX: 590).

[80] "Ego sum pastor bonus," *Sermo* 280.22, 3–11 (*h* XIX: 590): "Quomodo sumus boni pastores, qui non solum animam non damus pro ovibus, sed nullam etiam iniuriam propter eas pati volumus? Ne offendamus homines, negligimus gregem. Quis nostrum hodie pascit gregem verbo et exemplo, et quid patimur pro vita et pascentia eius? Nonne omnia operamur, non ut oves sed nos ipsi potius vivamus? Nonne sumus mercenarii?"

[81] "Ego sum pastor bonus," *Sermo* 280.23, 7–12 (*h* XIX: 590): "Hoc experimento manifeste constat, quam pauci sunt hodie pastores et quam multi mercenarii, quia veniente adversario tamquam illi qui sua quaerunt, paene omnes fugiunt. Sed si forent pastores, tunc haberent oves non ut alienas sed suas."

stimulated or excusing little or nothing by penitential injunctions, that they might carry off favor and money. And so they sacrifice souls, that they might consume earthly things."[82]

The solution to this clerical malaise is for the cleric to imitate the Good Shepherd in becoming a truly *christiform* "good shepherd of souls" (*pastor bonus animarum*).[83] Christ as Good Shepherd is the exemplar for all pastors: "Christ is the pastor of pastors. He is the law and the light of shepherds. He is the means for feeding and the life which is the goal of feeding and the truth which remains. In all things he holds the chief place (*primatum*)."[84] The shepherd becomes a good shepherd and pastor of souls by imitating Christ. Since Christ knows his sheep individually, so too must the clergy:

> Let us listen first and before all to how Christ calls himself the Good Shepherd and knows his sheep. That Shepherd, who alone is also the giver of life, knows who is prepared for the kingdom from the start and who are the predestined, and those that know him as Shepherd, because they hear him as the Son of God. The other shepherds do not know in truth like Christ, but in conjecture, and the greater the zeal they use that they might know, the more they become *christiform*.[85]

Recalling a favorite Cusan motif of conjecture, he argues that the pastor cannot possibly possess the knowledge Christ does of his sheep. Nevertheless, he is obligated to pursue that knowledge in imitation of the Good Shepherd. Cusanus then utilizes two metaphors to describe the

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[82] "Ego sum pastor bonus," *Sermo* 280.25, 4–9 (*h* XIX: 591): "Quid est, fratres, horribilius quam quod plures complacendo absolvunt a gravibus delictis, non aggravando, sed palpitando seu excusando parva aut nulla paenitentia iniuncta, ut favorem et lucrum reportent. Utique mactant animas, ut devorent terrena." He will raise similar criticisms of the apostolic penitentiary two years later in Rome.

[83] "Ego sum pastor bonus," *Sermo* 280.26, 7.

[84] "Ego sum pastor bonus," *Sermo* 280.27, 9–12 (*h* XIX: 591): "Christus est pastor pastorum. Ipse est lex et lux pastorum. Ipse est via pascendi et vita quae finis pascentiae et est veritas permanens. In omnibus ipse primatum tenet."

[85] "Ego sum pastor bonus," *Sermo* 280.29, 1–9 (*h* XIX: 592): "Attendamus quomodo primo et ante Omnia Christus se dicit pastorem bonum et cognoscere oves suas. Solus ille pastor qui est et dator vitae, cognoscit, quibus paratum est regnum ab initio et qui sunt praedestinati, et illi ipsum ut pastorem cognoscunt, quia ut Filium Dei audiunt. Alii pastores non cognoscunt in veritate ut Christus, sed in coniectura, et quanto magis studium adhibent ut cognoscant, tanto christiformiores."

relationship between shepherds and sheep: ruler and subject, father and son.[86] The two are interrelated for him in order to avoid a strict hierarchicalism. The ecclesiastical office (*principatus*) and its subjects (*subditus*) are part of a Dionysian hierarchy connected by a coincidence of subjects ascending and rulers descending. This connection of descending *principatus* and ascending *subditus* constitutes the church and through it the sheep know the shepherd and the shepherd knows the sheep.[87] He balances the relationship of hierarch to subordinate, however, with the relationshop of father to son. What could be more negligent, Cusanus asks, than for a father not to know his son? Likewise, the *principatus* in the church, which refers to the pastoral office of the shepherd, must know those under his care. It is a "rulership of friendship" (*principatum amicitiarum*). "The shepherd, therefore, is the father of the sons submitted to him, and they should submit as one son, since from their unity they comprise the one mystical body of the Shepherd."[88] Even more, the relationship of ruler and subject as father and son reflects that of the divine Father and Son. As the Father generated the Son, so do clerical fathers generate "spiritually equal sons" through baptism, "indeed generating the faith of those subjects from his own faith through the spirit, that Christ might be formed in

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[86] He had uses the same contrasting images in his 1454 chapter visitation sermon, but now he addresses the Brixen clergy as rulers, not subjects, in accordance with their pastoral office.

[87] "Ego sum pastor bonus," *Sermo* 280.31, 1–10 (*h* XIX: 592): "In cognitione pastorali est coincidentia consideranda. Sicut enim in ordne illo divini principatus, quae hierarchia dicitur, coincidit in descensu principatus ascensus subiectionis. Nam haec coincidentia est medium conexionis, in quo subsistit ecclesia; sic in cognitione, nam hoc est cognoscere oves in pastore ut pastore, quod est cognoscere pastorem in subditis ut subditis. Si cognoscit pastor pascendos paterne, cognoscunt pascendi pastorem filialiter."

[88] "Ego sum pastor bonus," *Sermo* 280.32, 1–15 (*h* XIX: 592): "Quis est pater, qui est adeo negligens, quod non cognoscit filios? Et quis filius adeo negligens, quod non cognoscit patrem suum, illum scilicet, qui se sibi ut patrem ostendit? Quanta debet esse amicitia inter pastorem et subditos, ex hoc docemur; nam prima amicitia est patris ad filium, quae tenet principatum amicitiarum. Nulla autem talis est, si non praecedit cognitio, scilicet quod se cognoscant. Cognitio igitur quae initio praecedit amicitiam, quae esse debet prima et maxima, debet esse ut patris et filii cognitio. Pastor igitur pater subditi filii, et esse debent subditi ut unus filius, quia faciunt ex unitate unum corpus mysticum pastoris. Quemlibet enim ex subditis ut unicum debet habere filium."

the faithful."[89] Ultimately, the shepherd is able to form such faith in the laity only because Christ, as Good Shepherd, first formed it in him.[90] This *christiform* bond should exist between clergy and laity precisely because it is the relationship that exists between Christ, the Good Shepherd, and his flock, the mystical body. The dual metaphors of ruler-subject and father-son furthermore enable Cusanus to skirt an authoritarian way of framing the relationship between clergy and laity. Instead, the clergy imitate the Good Shepherd not by ruling the flock, but by coming to know it as Christ knows it. The movement in this version of the hierarchy again is both downward and upward: the clergy exercise pastoral care in imitation of Christ so that the faithful might be purged of their sins and conform to him.

The *christiform* bond of *principatus* and *subditus* represents a christological nexus that will culminate in the sermon's final argument. Christ is "all in all." He is in the shepherd, teaching him to take control (*docens praesse*) of those submitted to him as shepherd; he is in the subjects, teaching them to obey and submit; in fact he is in the rich, the ill, the judge, and so on, teaching them to exercise whatever virtue is given.[91] Therefore, he gives the individuals power to do whatever is required of them. Feeding is the responsibility of the shepherd, the "divine form" given to him, and by feeding the flock he remains a "good shepherd."[92] The same is true for the

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[89] "Ego sum pastor bonus," *Sermo* 280.34, 5–10 (*h* XIX: 593): "Sicut enim una est fides baptizantis et baptizati, sic in spiritu pastoris debet esse fides, in qua Christus, quae debet generare filios spiritales aequales, scilicet generando de fide sua fidem in spiritu subditi, ut formetur in fideli Christus."

[90] "Ego sum pastor bonus," *Sermo* 280.34, 10–13 (*h* XIX: 593): "Ecce pastor bonus habet in se per fidem pastorem bonum, scilicet Christum, et generat in subdito per fidem pastorem, scilicet Christum."

[91] "Ego sum pastor bonus," *Sermo* 280.36, 1–11 (*h* XIX: 593): "Attente considera quomodo Christus est 'omnia in omnibus': in pastore est ut pastor, in subdito ut subditus et oboediens. In pastore Christus est verbum Dei docens praeesse, in subdito verbum Dei docens parere et subici, in divite docens humilitatem et misericordiam, in infirmo patientiam, in iudice iustitiam, et ita de omnibus. Nam quidquid virtutis est, docet hoc verbum. Et pro exemplo doctrinae producit humanitatem suam, ut homo in ipsam respiciat et sic verbo et exemplo pascatur."

[92] "Ego sum pastor bonus," *Sermo* 280.38, 9–14 (*h* XIX: 593): "Unde pascentia est forma divina dans pastori vitale et delectabile esse. Ideo nihil dans pastori vitale et delectabile esse. Ideo nihi est ei carius illa forma, immo omnem vitam sensibilem animalem sive animam atque omne esse et quidquid dici potest pro nihilo habet, ut maneat pastor bonus."

subjects, which in this sense applies to all Christians. Obedience is necessary for the subjects, therefore God provides them the ability to be obedient and through it "become sons of God."[93] This is an important parallel because for Cusanus the cleric as a *pastor bonus* is not at odds with the cleric as Christian. He is at once a *principatus* and a *subditus*. This also makes him ever subordinate to Christ as his pastoral and personal exemplar. Christ is the content of Scripture that he preaches to the faithful, thus giving further christological shape to the clerical task. "Each and every scripture which promises a visitor and a shepherd and a redeemer and an illuminator and a vivifier and even a savior speaks of Christ."[94] Christ is the "revelation," the "image," the "figure," and the "legate" of Father.[95] As such, he is also the *notitiam sive scientiam aut cognitionem Dei*.[96] The knowledge of the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep is the image to which all—clergy and laity alike—should conform.

Here Cusanus lays out a case for the personal renewal of all through conformity to the Good Shepherd. It is as applicable to the cleric as to the layperson, to the secular as to the religious, to the preacher as to the hearer, to the *principatus* as to the *subditus*. Just as he had inverted the counsels of perfection for the religious, here he essentially levels the ecclesiastical hierarchy such that both clergy and laity find themselves in the same relation to Christ. This last

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[93] "Ego sum pastor bonus," *Sermo* 280.40, 1–7 (*h* XIX: 594): "Quoniam impossibile non praecipitur a Deo, ideo praeceptum eius dat etiam potestatem parendi, puta si praeciperet homini, ut volaret, daret eo ipso potestatem, per quam posset. Similiter quia dat potestatem, quod possumus esse filii Dei recipiendo in nos Christum, qui est forma filiationis, ideo etiam mandat, ut faciamus."

[94] "Ego sum pastor bonus," *Sermo* 280.46, 9–12 (*h* XIX: 595): "Immo et omnis scriptura quae visitatorem et pastorem et redemptorem et illuminatorem et vivificatorem atque salvatorem promittit, de Christo loquitur."

[95] "Ego sum pastor bonus," *Sermo* 280.48, 1–13 (*h* XIX: 595–96): "Filius est revelatio Patris. Ideo dicitur 'imago' et 'figura substantiae eius', quia per ipsum accedit omnis intellectualis natura ad invisibilem Deum, quia est notitia sive via sive sapientia sive veritas et cetera huiusmodi, quae revelant Deum Patrem. Ipse est medium, per quod Pater creator omnia operatur, quia omnia operatur propter se ipsum, ut ostendatur gloria eius et cognoscatur. Ideo Filius est verbum, per quod se ostendit Pater creando et operando. Unde Christus se dicit Filium, quia Pater 'per ipsum' opera facit; quae opera cum sint creatoris et fiunt per ipsum, ideo concludit ipse se esse legatum et Filium Dei."

[96] "Ego sum pastor bonus," *Sermo* 280.50, 2 (*h* XIX: 596).

and lengthiest of Cusanus's synodal homilies draws together all three strands of his clerical reform from the Brixen-era synodal and chapter visitation sermons. First, the priesthood serves its illuminative role through which Christ is mediated to the faithful in order that the faithful might conform themselves to Christ and as the *christiform* attain salvation. Second, since Christ is the object which the clergy mediates to the faithful, there remains a christological content to preaching, catechesis, liturgy, and sacrament. Third, Christ as Good Shepherd likewise becomes the image of reform for the clergy, that they might become *christiform* shepherds and expiate their vocational tasks by mediating salvation to the faithful, even exercising pastoral care in imitation of the true *Pastor Bonus*.

Pastoral Reform and the Brixen Clergy

The evolution of Cusanus's approach to pastoral reform parallels the development of his monastic reform ideas, though it reflects concerns specific to the diocesan clergy in Brixen. The responsibility of the clergy to mediate Christ to the faithful was central to his first synodal sermon and related homilies. In this, he simply incorporated the Dionysian concept of illumination that he had affirmed in his much earlier conciliar thought. The ongoing conflicts and failures of his early episcopacy, however, convinced the bishop that the clergy were indifferent to his reforms and their vocational obligations. As a result, he soon came to emphasize those pastoral responsibilitites in both visitation homilies and his second synodal sermon. He drops the emphasis on Dionysian illumination in the process, searching for a way to correct the apparent disconnect between the reform of the clergy and the salvation of the faithful. As with monastic reform, the *christiformitas* motif supplies him with the necessary link. At roughly the same time that he reengages the Dionysian corpus and *christiformitas* reenters his theological vocabulary, Cusanus also begins to use conformity to Christ as the crucial nexus between illumination and perfection in the Dionysian hierarchies. *Christiform* preaching begets *christiform* faithful. When

the clergy mediate Christ to the faithful as object for their conformity, they enable the faithful to attain salvation. It is only at the final synodal sermon that he brings the three strands of clerical reform together. He shifts the emphasis from *christiform* preaching to *christiform* clergy. The clergy imitate Christ as the Good Shepherd, both in their preaching and in their pastoral care. He can now apply *christiformitas* to clerical reform, giving the clergy a concrete image to fulfill their vocational obligations and in so doing illuminate the faithful toward perfection.

In this, Cusanus merely applies the broader concepts of church and reform that he comes to articulate in the crucial period from late-1455 on in his Brixen pulpit. His understanding of a *sacerdotium permixtum* and the illuminative function of the clergy as a downward mediation of the saving knowledge of Christ both reflect his later concept of the church as a mystical body oriented hierarchically toward union with Chirst. The hierarchical concepts of authority (*principatus*) and subordinate (*subditus*) remain, but he complements them with the images of father and son and with the Good Shepherd who knows the sheep in contrast with hirelings who seek only their own good. Similarly, *christiformitas* shapes not only his view of the *imitatio Christi* as the means for attaining salvation, but also the relationship between clergy and laity. The clergy imitate Christ in fulfilling their pastoral obligations of preaching and pastoral care in order that they might mediate the knowledge of Christ to the faithful as object for their conformity. The Good Shepherd becomes a *christiform* image specifically intended for the clergy. Finally, through his application of the Dionysian hierarchies to the reform of the clergy he can bring those concepts into a seemingly coherent whole that avoids the authoritarian or hierocratic thesis often attributed to his exercise of church authority. The clergy illuminate the faithful by mediating the knowledge of Christ downward to them, but only so that they might as a result conform themselves to the Christ thus mediated, participate in him through imitiation, and ascend the hierarchy toward perfection.

An additional consideration pertains to the collapse of the distinction between order and jurisdiction in the clerical reform sermons. Cusanus's *De concordantia catholica* had maintained the traditional medieval distinction between the sacramental power of order and the governmental power of jurisdiction, and furthermore followed the conciliar tradition in restricting itself almost exclusively to the "external forum" of that jurisdiction related to wielding authority in the church. After his long battles in defense of Eugenius IV, leading to the settlement of the conciliar controversy and almost immediately thereafter into his legatine and episcopal reforms, Cusanus now found himself in position to reform the diocesan clergy as *membra*. In the same way that he inverted the counsels of perfection for the religious, then, he conflates the separate hierarchies of order and jurisidiction into one and places them under the aegis of the Dionysian hierarchy. The priesthood no longer has an independent power of order related to the sacramental mysteries and an independent power of jurisdiction constrained to the governance of the church, but its very graded hierarchy—from Peter, Paul, and the other apostles to their successors in the Petrine ministry to the bishops and presbyters—is the means through which Christ illuminates the faithful with knowledge of him and in turn enables them to attain salvation. Furthermore, this brings the relationship between the clerical *principatus* and the inferior *subditus* into alignment with his Dionysian notion of theosis as intellective salvation. There is no distinction between the illumination mediated by the clergy and the offices within the ecclesiastical hierarchy. On the contrary, the graded hierarchy is in fact the very means through which the knowledge of Christ comes to the lower ranks and ultimately to the faithful that all, including clergy, might ascend that hierarchy toward perfection and theosis.

Finally, the context and reasons behind this development parallel the monastic reform sermons. As with his shift toward observant reform among the religious, Cusanus grew to believe that the diocesan clergy were indifferent either to his reforms or to their clerical

responsibilities. He made numerous attempts at addressing it through his episcopal power of jurisdiction. Synodical legislation revolved around clerical conduct, ecclesiastical supervision, and liturgical reforms, but was often ignored or contested, even when it came with the threat of excommunication, expulsion from the diocese, or removal of benefice. He saw clerical reform as fundamental for the salvation of the faithful but had no conceptual apparatus for relating the two. This gave him cause to reconsider the relationship between order and jurisdiction, between the salvific illuminative role of the clergy and the practical reforms aimed at fulfilling their vocational obligations. He found that apparatus—as he had in both his sermons in the Brixen cathedral and those in visitation of the religious—in the Dionysian hierarchies, which synthesized elements of mystical theology, ecclesiology, and church reform. The question of authority hovered over his episcopacy and his reform of the diocesan clergy, as it had with the religious, and the Dionysian concepts of church and reform gave him a way to circumvent the gridlock and emphasize to the clergy their responsibility to imitate the Good Shepherd and aid the *subditus* under their care in reaching salvation. It will finally alleviate itself somewhat upon arriving in Rome, where the cardinal of *San Pietro in Vincoli* receives the titles of legate of the city and vicar general of temporal affairs. Nonetheless, he will take the concepts deployed at Brixen with him and put them to use in reforming the Roman curia and basilica clergy.

CHAPTER SIX

PASTORAL REFORM IN ROME

The concepts of church and reform Nicholas of Cusa articulates throughout the Brixen period eventually come together in Rome with his constructive reform proposal of 1459. The study of church reform in *quattrocento* Rome has undergone much revision in recent decades, largely because the narrative of the Renaissance in which it is set has changed over the same period. Pastor was once forced to divide Renaissance Rome into two competing parties: one profaning the church through secularized art, literature, and politics, another protecting it from those excesses.[1] This interpretation had its roots in Jakob Burckhardt's definition of the Renaissance as a progressive erosion of medieval Christian values and a harbinger of secular modernity.[2] The Burckhardtian interpretation has since lost sway due to the work of twentieth-century medieval and Renaissance scholarship, though it owes most to Paul Oskar Kristeller's debunking of the myth that Renaissance thought was neo-pagan.[3] By narrowing the scope of humanism to comprise only a specific strand of cultural and educational commitments and at the same time broadening the net of the Renaissance to include any number of late medieval theological and philosophical opinions, Kristeller gave scholars far more flexibility in describing *quattrocento* Christianity. It became licit to define certain Renaissance thinkers as humanist

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[1] On Pastor and the historiography of the Christian Renaissance, see Ferguson, *Renaissance and Historical Thought*, 342–43, and Charles L. Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1998), xi–xii.

[2] For literature, see chapter one, n. 15.

[3] For the essence of his argument, see the various essays in Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought: The Classical, Scholastic, and Humanist Strains* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961).

inheritors of patristic anthropology and soteriology (Trinkaus), purveyors of theology and ecclesiology through Renaissance culture (Stinger), art (Shearman), and architecture (Westfall), committed preachers in service of the church (O'Malley), even Roman ecclesiastics attempting to reform the church from within its own bureaucracy (O'Malley, D'Amico).[4]

While such scholarship made possible the reconciliation of Christianity with Renaissance humanism, it has presented the so-called Renaissance papacy in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries as essentially intransigent to internal reform and concerned predominantly with its patronage of the Papal States and rebuilding of Rome.[5] Cusanus's efforts in Rome have traditionally been placed against this backdrop. His sweeping program for reform of the Roman curia, the 1459 *Reformatio generalis*, has received increasing attention since the publication of the 1914 edition by Stephen Ehses.[6] The main accounts of Cusanus's Roman reforms, however, have focused on the ultimate ineffectiveness of his proposals in the context of the Renaissance papacy and in this connection the relative continuity and discontinuity of the *Reformatio generalis* with either Cusanus's own early conciliarism or with subsequent Protestant efforts at reform in the sixteenth century.[7] The prevailing assumption is that, despite attempts to improve

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[4] Charles Edward Trinkaus, *"In Our Image and Likeness": Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought*, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Stinger, *Renaissance in Rome*; Carroll William Westfall, *In This Most Perfect Paradise: Alberti, Nicholas V, and the Invention of Conscious Urban Planning in Rome, 1447–55* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1974); John K. G. Shearman, *Raphael's Cartoons in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen, and the Tapestries for the Sistine Chapel* (London: Phaidon, 1972); O'Malley, *Praise and Blame*; John W. O'Malley, *Giles of Viterbo on Church and Reform: A Study in Renaissance Thought* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968); and John F. D'Amico, *Renaissance Humanism in Papal Rome: Humanists and Churchmen on the Eve of the* Reformation (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1983).

[5] The now classic statement of this is Prodi, *Papal Prince*, 1–16. For a critique of Prodi's methodology and augmentation of his argument, see Emily D. O'Brien, "The Anatomy of an Apology: The War against Conciliarism and the Politicization of Papal Authority in the Comentarii of Pope Pius II (1458–1464)" (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 2005), 11–20.

[6] Ehses, "Der Reformentwurf des Kardinals Nikolaus Cusanus," 274–97. Prior to Ehses, the two published versions were F.A. Scharpf, *Des Cardinal und Bischof Nicolaus von Cusa wichtigste Schriften in deutscher Übersetzung* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1843), 284–303, and Johann Martin Düx, *Der deutsche Cardinal Nicolaus von Cusa und der Kirche seiner Zeit* (Regensburg: G.J. Manz, 1847), 88–105, 451–66.

[7] For literature, see chapter one, n. 40.

the moral and institutional character of the Renaissance-era Roman church, reformers such as Cusanus were unable to bring their broad-minded theological, philosophical, and ethical ideals to bear on a church bureaucracy effectively institutionalized against reform.[8] In this sense, Cusanus's Roman reform has not benefited from the rejection of the Burckhardtian thesis in the way that Renaissance Christianity more generally has.

To date, few have explored the relationship between the reform proposal and the four reform sermons Cusanus preaches in Rome during spring 1459, let alone with the concepts of church and reform he employed throughout the Brixen period.[9] The present chapter will do so. It will show that, not the complexities of Renaissance Rome, but the concepts of church and reform emerging in the Brixen period proved instrumental in shaping Cusanus's Roman reform efforts, concepts he continued to develop into a coherent vision of a *reformatio in capite et membris*. First, it will survey the pivotal events of 1458 and 1459 that gave the Brixen bishop and cardinal of St. Peter in Chains the opportunity to preach and propose reform. It will then examine the concepts of church and reform present in both the four Roman sermons preached from January through March of 1459—under the authorization of a papal bull from Pius II—and the draft reform bull he pens for Pius later that year. By way of summary, it will make explicit the common lines of thought those reform efforts share and sketch their continuity with the same

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[8] Similar versions of this argument can be found in D'Amico, *Renaissance Humanism in Papal Rome*, 212–37; Denys Hay, *The Church in Italy in the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 83–88; and Thompson, *Popes and Princes*, 108.

[9] The exceptions are John O'Malley and Thomas Izbicki. O'Malley has compared both Cusanus's sermons and his reform proposal with other leading reform preachers in Renaissance Rome in O'Malley, *Praise and Blame*, 94–101, 199. See also Izbicki, "Ambivalent Papalism," 58–61; Izbicki, "Church," 132–33; and Izbicki, "*Christiformitas*," 1–16. Another is Reinhardt and Schwaetzer, "Mystique et réforme," 255–76. A short treatment of the theme of obedience in the Roman sermons is also found in Herrold, "Doctrinae oboedientiae," 182–85.

concepts employed throughout the Brixen episcopate in order to underscore the development of Cusanus's thought on clerical reform that comes to full expression in the *Reformatio generalis*.

Cusanus in Rome

In September 1458, after a year of seclusion in Castle Andraz at Buchenstein following the Wilten affair, Cusanus took leave of his see and headed for Rome—"the only fatherland for the cardinal," according to his good friend, the Sienese humanist, and by then pope, Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini.[10] The affinity between Pius and Cusanus is necessary to understand the role the latter would play in the reform of the city churches of Rome and the reform proposal he drafts. Both were educated in the humanist thought of early *quattrocento* Italy.[11] Both were present at the Council of Basel as supporters of the conciliar majority. Both left the majority, though at different times, and became supporters of Eugenius IV.[12] Aeneas Sylvius thereafter penned his famous histories of the Council of Basel, one of which featured a dialogue between the papal advocate Cusanus and a conciliarist interlocutor.[13] Both ended up in German lands, Cusanus as papal advocate and envoy to Frederick III, Aeneas Sylvius in the very chancery of Frederick. It

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[10] Erich Meuthen, *Die letzten Jahre des Nikolaus von Kues: Biographische Untersuchungen nach neuen Quellen* (Köln: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1958), 15. Cusanus was the only German residential cardinal in the fifteenth century, Peter Partner, *The Pope's Men: The Papal Civil Service in the Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 188.

[11] This chapter will make no attempt to explore the nature of the complicated relationship between Cusanus and his longtime associate, though it is worth noting that the appointment of Aeneas Sylvius to the pontificate represents a dramatic upswing in the fortunes of Cusanus personally in light of his tense relationship with Calixtus III. On the common pedigrees of Cusanus and Aeneas Sylvius, see Guido Kisch, "Nikolaus Cusanus und Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini," 35–43. For their divergences personally and intellectualy, see Wilhelm Baum, "Nikolaus von Kues und Enea Silvio Piccolomini—ein Humanistenfreundschaft?" in *Nicolaus Cusanus zwischen Deutschland und Italien: Beiträge eines deutsch-italienischen Symposiums in der Villa Vigoni*, ed. Martin Thurner (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2002), 315–38.

[12] On their respective conversions, see Watanabe, "Authority and Consent," 217–36.

[13] The *Libellus dialogorum* was a dialogue between Cusanus and a conciliar defender of Basel, Stephano da Caccia, and the two-volume *De gestis Concilii Basiliensis* dealt with Eugenius's deposition and the antipope Felix's election. On these, see Gerald Christianson, "Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini and the Historiography of the Council of Basel," in *Ecclesia Militans: Studien zur Konzilien- und Reformationgeschichte*, ed. Walter Brandmüller, Herbert Immenkötter, and Erwin Iserloh, 2 vols. (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1988), 2:157–84, and Emily O'Brien, "Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini and the Histories of the Council of Basel," in *The Church, the Councils, and Reform*, 60–81.

was during this period that Cusanus's Italian friend gave him the sobriquet, "Hercules of all the Eugenians," for his efforts defending the Roman pope against the French antipope, Amadeus of Savoy, and the rump council at Basel. From there, however, the two contemporaries took different paths. Cusanus was elevated to the cardinalate in 1448, named bishop of Brixen in 1450, and undertook his legatine mission throughout Germany and the Low Countries, before spending the ensuing six years in his diocese. Aeneas Sylvius, on the other hand, would become bishop of Trieste and later Siena, waiting until 1456 to be elevated to the cardinalate under Calixtus III, and then in a 1458 conclave was elected pope. While still a cardinal, he wrote multiple letters to his embattled episcopal friend in Brixen, urging him to leave the "snow and the closed in, shadowy valleys" of Brixen for the Roman curia.[14]

Cusanus was not one of the eighteen cardinals present at the August 16, 1458 conclave that elected Aeneas Sylvius, but remained secluded in Buchenstein.[15] The conclave resulted in the election of the new Pius II, who consented to three specific electoral capitulations, two of which are formative for Cusanus's reform efforts once in Rome.[16] The first, also a condition of Calixtus's selection, was to further the cause of a crusade against the Ottoman forces. This would occupy the pope's attention until death. The second, however, was by all admissions nearer to his heart and that entailed a reform of the Roman curia.[17] Pius began to address the latter almost immediately after his election, convening a commission—of which Cusanus was likely a

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[14] The two letters are dated December 27, 1456, and August 1, 1457. They are printed as sources I and II in Meuthen, *Die letzten Jahre*, 133–35.

[15] R.J. Mitchell, *The Laurels and the Tiara*. 108.

[16] Thompson, *Popes and Princes*, 67–68. On the development of electoral capitulations among late medieval popes, see Lulvès, "Päpstliche Wahlkapitulationen," 212–35, and more recently Thomas Michael Krüger, "Überlieferung und Relevanz der päpstlichen Wahlkapitulationen (1352–1522): Zur Verfassungsgeschichte von Papsttum und Kardinalat," *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 81 (2001): 228–55.

[17] The third capitulation was to aid all members of the curia who had insufficient stipends below 4000 florins with an additional 100 florins per month from the papal treasury, Thompson, *Popes and Princes*, 67–68.

member—composed of various prelates and theologians to consider reforms of the Roman court.[18] Reform would have to take a backseat in order for Pius to raise a crusade. He decided to convene the Congress of Mantua to accrue support for the campaign against the Turks and address some of the pressing fiscal and administrative concerns of the church, including the conflict in which Cusanus was embroiled with Sigismund. Before leaving, Pius appointed a "skeleton staff" to run the curia in his absence and named several key figures to act as representatives in his stead. He named Galeazzo Cavriani, the bishop of Mantua, governor of Rome, and Francesco de Lignamine, bishop of Ferrara, the vicar general for spiritual affairs in a January 11, 1459 bull, eleven days prior to his departure for the congress.[19] In the same bull, he also named Cusanus the vicar general of temporal affairs (*vicarius generalis in temporalibus cum pleno apostolice sedis legati de latere officio*), plying the cardinal's noted fiscal and administrative acumen for use in various territories within the Papal States.[20] This came with a particular twist since one month earlier Pius had already declared his friend and the former *legatus a latere* now *legatus Urbi*—the legate of the city of Rome.[21] In accordance with his function as legate in Rome, the bull charged Cusanus with reforming the four principal basilicas in Rome: St. Peter's outside the walls, St. Paul, St. John Lateran, and St. Mary the Greater. It also gave him authority to reform other churches, monasteries, and convents within the city of Rome.[22]

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[18] Pastor, *History of the Popes*, 3:269. Hay, *Italian Church*, 86, claims that the details of this commission "still remain obscure."

[19] Meuthen, *Die letzten Jahre*, 28.

[20] Meuthen, *Die letzten Jahre*, 28, 143.

[21] This was on December 11, 1458, according to Meuthen, *Die letzten Jahre*, 28.

[22] Meuthen claims that Cusanus was the first vicar general authorized with reforming the clergy, Meuthen, *Nicholas of Cusa*, 125.

When Pius left for Mantua on January 20, 1459, Cusanus immediately began fulfilling the tasks set out for him in the bull. One week later, he visited St. Peter's. Two weeks after that, he convened a synod of the Roman clergy. He would go on to visit the other three principal basilicas, though documentation remains scant. The primary sources available are the four sermons he preached: the January 27, 1459 sermon at St. Peter's, the February 10, 1459 sermon at the Roman synod, the February 23, 1459 sermon at St. John Lateran, and the March 6, 1459 sermon at St. Mary the Greater.[23] There is no extant sermon or documentation of the visit to St. Paul.[24] All four sermons are conspicuous for their attention primarily to the personal reform of the Roman clergy, and only secondarily to the reform of their clerical practice. The audience for these four sermons is uncertain since there are no published records of the proceedings. It is likely that canons and others with benefices connected to the specific churches were present since the reform bull specifically threatened the removal of "benefices, offices, and dignities" of those in the principal basilicas.[25] Similarly, the Roman synod would have included all clergy of the various basilicas, along with those of the other Roman churches, monasteries, and convents he was charged with reforming in the bull.[26]

The Roman synod and visitations were limited in scope and only began the cardinal's reform work on behalf of Pius. From Mantua, the pope urged Cusanus to continue his efforts,

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[23] "Sic currite, ut comprehendatis," *Sermo* 289 (*h* XIX: 652–57); "Dum sanctificatus fuero in vobis," *Sermo* 290 (*h* XIX: 658–67); "Homo erat pater familias," *Sermo* 291 (*h* XIX: 668–72); and "Iam autem die festo mediante," *Sermo* 292 (*h* XIX: 673–80). There is an English translation of *Sermo* 290 in Izbicki, *Writings on Church and Reform*, 529–49.

[24] Meuthen, *Die letzten Jahre*, 31.

[25] Meuthen, *Die letzten Jahre*, 143–44.

[26] There is some internal evidence of this in *Sermo* 291 and *Sermo* 292, both preached after the synodal homily. He opens the February 23 visit to St. John's Lateran with a reference to how the gathered clergy had heard of his commissioning to visit the chief churches of the site. The March 6 visit to St. Mary the Greater is even more telling since he opens the sermon with a reminder that they had heard of the mandate to visit the churches "when we held synod" (*dum synodum servaremus*).

which were to include detailed regulations for the reform of the Roman Rota (the legislative tribunal under the pope's auspices) and the curia itself.[27] This is the apparent stimulus behind the *Reformatio generalis* of the same year. Though the reform commission's work was stinted due to Mantua, two of its suspected participants—Cusanus and Dominic de Domenichi, bishop of Torcello—drafted reform proposals. Cusanus likely wrote his in the second half of 1459.[28] The exact form of the proposal remains elusive, as there are no fewer than four extant manuscripts.[29] Nevertheless, after an important preface that defends his rationale for the reform tract to the pope himself, Cusanus drafts the remainder in the voice of Pius, first providing fourteen rules for visitors, then some specific instructions for reform of papacy and curia, before concluding with additional rules for the reform of the Roman churches and the notorious apostolic penitentiary. What stands out about his approach is that he begins with the pope and curia, then argues all subsequent reform of the church is dependent upon reforming the papal "eyes" of the mystical body charged with overseeing the rest of the church. The proposal from Domenichi was less theologically oriented, yet it also started with reform of the papal and curial head, then proceeded to the members.[30] Pius finally produced the reform bull he had promised in 1464, but it was not promulgated before his death.[31] It shares many of the same specific concerns as Cusanus's and Domenichi's, though it does not invite reform of the pope.

Neither the synod and visitations, nor the proposal itself, amounted to much during Cusanus's stay in Rome. One commentator notes that the opposition he received there was as

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[27] The letter, dated June 9, 1459 at Mantua, is in Meuthen, *Die letzten Jahre*, 183–87.

[28] Meuthen, *Die letzten Jahre*, 32, and Pavlac, "Reform," 98.

[29] For discussion of the manuscript traditions, see the preface to the critical edition, *h* XV: xx–xxvii.

[30] Pastor, *History of the Popes*, 3:272–75, and Hubert Jedin, *Studien über Domenico de' Domenichi (1416–1478)* (Wiesbaden: Steiner Verlag, 1958).

[31] Haubst, "Der Reformentwurf," 194–95, claims that Pius never published it because it was so closely identified with him personally that it would not be implementable after his impending death.

vigorous as what he faced during the Brixen episcopate.[32] He would prove successful in numerous reform endeavors throughout these last few years of his life, including mediating a dispute between Franciscans and Dominicans and the reform of the diocese in Orvieto. He also applied himself to various administrative and temporal affairs with great aplomb.[33] Yet the lasting image of Cusanus's curial service became his tense conflict with the pope when Pius attempted to name six new cardinals, despite agreement that he would not increase the number.[34] Cusanus himself was said to have stared with "angry eyes" as Pius defended the selection of the Frenchman, Jean Jouffroy.[35] Later, he would reproach the pope, lamenting that his cries for reform had gone unheard and that he desired to leave the curia, finally breaking down into tears.[36] Pius responded by dressing down the cardinal whom he had called to Rome, reminding

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[32] Anton Lübke, *Nikolaus von Kues: Kirchenfürst zwischen Mittelalter und Neuzeit* (Munich: Verlag Georg D.W. Callwey, 1968), 186.

[33] Meuthen, *Nicholas of Cusa*, 133–38.

[34] The Council of Constance had decreed that the number of cardinals should be no more than twenty. The numbers remained at or below that through the restoration pontificates of Martin V, Eugenius IV, and Nicholas V, but began to expand with Calixtus III, Hay, *Italian Church*, 34–37.

[35] Pius himself sought to pacify political tensions with France by naming French candidates Jouffroy, the bishop of Aras, and Prince d'Albert to the college in exchange for the repeal of the 1438 Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges and its attendant national ecclesiastical liberties. On this episode, see Pastor, *History of the Popes*, 3:135–52; Mitchell, *The Laurels and the Tiara*, 190–92; Glenn D. Kittler, *The Papal Princes: A History of the Sacred College of Cardinals* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1960), 192–93; and Thompson, *Popes and Princes*, 59–60.

[36] Cusanus's lament is oft-cited, but worth recalling again: "I have long suspected, Your Holiness, that I was hateful to you. Now I am certain of it since you ask of me what I cannot grant without incurring Heaven's reproach. You are preparing to create new cardinals without any pressing reason merely at your own whim and you have no regard for the oath you swore to the sacred college in the conclave before and after your elevation, namely that you would on no account create cardinals unless with the consent of the majority of the college and according to the decrees of the Council of Constance. Now you ignore the ordinance of the synod and do not ask the consent of the college and you wish to make me a tool of your ambition. I cannot do it. I do not know how to flatter. I hate adulation. If you can bear to hear the truth, I like nothing which goes on in this Curia. Everything is corrupt. No one does his duty. Neither you nor the cardinals have any care for the Church. What observance of the canons is there? What reverence for laws? What assiduity in divine worship? All are bent on ambition and avarice. If I ever speak in a consistory about reform, I am laughed at. I do no good here. Allow me to withdraw. I cannot endure these ways," *Commentaries of Pius II*, 4:500.

him of his place. The two whose fates had intertwined for over thirty years would die only days apart in 1464.[37]

1459 Roman Synodal and Visitation Sermons

Roman Synodal Sermon

The four reform sermons Cusanus preaches in late winter 1459 bring together many of the images present throughout the Brixen sermons. Each of these sermons addresses the clergy first as Christians, chiefly using the image of *christiformitas*, while drawing on the Dionysian relationships between hierarchy and imitation, illumination and perfection. The synodal sermon requires consideration first, in part because it is more extensive than the other three and in part because it had a different setting. He preached to the synod on February 10, 1459, the Saturday following Ash Wednesday. He addressed the gathered clergy, presumably a cross section of canons and higher clergy from Roman churches, in an unspecified chapel.[38] What separates this sermon at the outset from the Brixen synodal homilies is that he spends far less time considering the specific responsibilities of the clergy.[39] Save for a short section toward the end, he in fact mostly lays out the basis for their personal reform in terms of *christiformitas*, using the

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[37] This is the date which Iserloh identifies as the dawn of the Renaissance papacy, Iserloh, "Reform bei Nikolaus von Kues," 73. There are numerous opinions on how to date the Renaissance papacy. Jedin and Prodi see it before him in Nicholas V, and Stinger places it even earlier in 1443 under Eugenius IV, Jedin, *History of the Council*, 1:30; Prodi, *Papal Prince*, 42; and Stinger, *Renaissance in Rome*, 6. Whatever the value in using the Renaissance as modifier for the papacy, there is little doubt that a stark cultural chasm exists between the world of the popes during the Great Western Schism when Cusanus was born and that of the restored line continuing after his death.

[38] Izbicki suggests it was the *Cappella Maggiore* at the Vatican, later replaced by the Sistine Chapel, Izbicki, "*Christiformitas*," 6.

[39] He comes closest to addressing the clergy as clergy in a curious interpolation to another biblical citation. Referring to the account of Jesus reading the prophecy from Isaiah and announcing that the Scriptures were fulfilled in their hearing, he replaces hearing with seeing, or technically "before your eyes" ["Dum sanctificatus fuero in vobis," *Sermo* 290.3, 23–24 (*h* XIX: 659): "...ut legitur Lucae 4, dicens scilicet: 'Quia hodie completa est haec scriptura in' oculis 'vestris'."]. At first glance, this seems an understandable slip since Cusanus takes the eyes to be the central organ in his epistemology, but in a clerical setting such as the Roman synod he might also have in mind something else: the clergy are not accustomed to hearing the Scriptures, but rather to seeing them as readers. Whichever the case, the eyes become a dominant metaphor for the higher clergy in his reform tract later that year.

exegetical motif of sanctification he had drawn from the chosen text for the synod, Ezekiel 36:23–25.[40] When explaining this choice of text, Cusanus offers what is for him a fairly commonplace description of the Scriptures as a means of salvation. The Scriptures are sufficient for salvation because, once opened, one is able to believe their content.[41] That content—what the Scriptures contain (*est...contentum*)—is Jesus, the word himself.[42] Scripture is written for the faithful and the faithful are to return to Scripture to find what is sufficient for their salvation. Such a foray is typical for Cusanus in his other clerical homilies.

The first thicket the cardinal untangles is the manner in which the church sanctifies God, that is, makes him holy. There are two different dimensions to sanctification. First, the church sanctifies God by making him known. Second, the church sanctifies itself by conforming its works to Christ. Sinful humanity cannot sanctify God itself, but rather God is recognized by the sanctification the church receives from him.[43] God is the one who produces their works that those works might in turn reflect back on him. He is the "end of all their works." God "sanctifies that he might be sanctified, instructs that he might be understood, justifies that he might be justified, makes known that he might be made known, loves that he might be loved."[44] Cusanus also compares God's desire to be sanctified with that of a king. As a king has glory himself whether it

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[40] It appears that Cusanus chose this text at random, comparing his choice to the conversion experiences of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts and Augustine's *tolle, lege*. "Dum sanctificatus fuero in vobis," *Sermo* 290.2 (*h* XIX: 658–59).

[41] "Dum sanctificatus fuero in vobis," *Sermo* 290.2, 23–25 (*h* XIX: 659): "Similiter de sacra scriptura, quae aperienti codicem se oculis ingerit, credi poterit."

[42] "Dum sanctificatus fuero in vobis," *Sermo* 290.3, 12–14 (*h* XIX: 659): "Sufficiat scire christianum pro animae suae salute sollicitum non deseri a magistro, qui est verbum in scriptura divina contentum."

[43] "Dum sanctificatus fuero in vobis," *Sermo* 290.5, 18–20 (*h* XIX: 660): "Non quod sanctificator det aliquid, sed recognoscat se ab ipso datore recepisse ilia quae ipsum sanctificant."

[44] "Dum sanctificatus fuero in vobis," *Sermo* 290.6, 1–10 (*h* XIX: 660): "Vide, quomodo Deus est finis omnium suorum operum. Sanctificat ut sanctificetur, instruit ut intelligatur, iustificat ut iustificetur, clarificat ut clarificetur, amat ut ametur, et ita de singulis. Ideo e converso amantes Deum amantur, scientes sciuntur, sapientes sapiuntur et nescientes nesduntur, ignorantes ignorantur, in capitulo *Si* iuxta XXXVIII distinctionem. Qui enim vidit Deum sanctum in omnibus operibus suis vidit ipsum sanctificari in omnibus."

is known or not, yet he desires to make it known, so too does the God who has created all things desire to illuminate that creation in order that it might refract back on him.[45] The other argument he employs puts a christological spin on the chosen theme for the synod. The church's works make God known and thereby sanctify him. These works follow faith in Christ and therefore Christ himself is made known and sanctified by those who have a formed faith.[46] More broadly speaking, these arguments reflect both the revelatory nature of the priestood in the Dionysian hierarchies as a means through which the faithful are illuminated and *fides caritate formata* as a means by which the faithful imitiate Christ, their exemplar. It is important to remember that Cusanus is here addressing the clergy and thus makes his case for their participation in this twofold sanctifying activity of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Cusanus then supplies the concept he uses to connect the ascent to salvation with Christ as exemplar: *christiformitas*. Here he employs the image in relation to obtaining theosis, which in this context he refers to as *deiformitas*:

> You might say: If holiness should become *deiformitas*, how is it acquired? I say: In *christiformitas*. For, when God was unknown to us, in order to draw us to *deiformitas*, he sent the Son into our nature, who, when he became man, was able to come near to us, that as he put on our mortal nature apart from every vice, we know how, if we are absent vice, we are able to put him on, and thus, as he himself was made "son of man," we become sons of God.[47]

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[45] "Dum sanctificatus fuero in vobis," *Sermo* 290.12 (*h* XIX: 662).

[46] "Dum sanctificatus fuero in vobis," *Sermo* 290.11, 1–19 (*h* XIX: 662): "Adhuc dicta verba introitus nos christiani applicemus ad Christum. Credimus Christum sic nobis loqui: 'Dum sanctificatus fuero in vobis' ut Filius Dei, 'congregabo' etc. Et haec est evangelli summa, scilicet credere lesum Filium Dei in fide viva et formata et inhaesitabili, ita ut Deus Dei Filius in nobis sanctificetur. Tunc certissime haec faciet, quae sequuntur in themate. In eo enim, in quo sic Christus sanctificatur, non vivit nisi Christus. Hic in Christum mutatus spiritu Christi movetur ad complementum omnium quae evangelium praecipit. Qui enim verba Christi credit esse verba Filii Dei, scit esse 'verba vitae aetemae', et non abit retro, sed sequitur Christum usque in mortem. Hie est totus lucidus, et dum 'lucent opera sua coram hominibus, glorificant homines Patrem qui in caelis est', et haec glorificatio est clarificatio sive sanctificatio quam Deus requirit."

[47] "Dum sanctificatus fuero in vobis," *Sermo* 290.13, 1–10 (*h* XIX: 663): "Diceres: Cum sanctitas sit deiformitas, quomodo acquiritur? Dico: In christiformitate. Nam, cum Deus sit nobis incognitus, ut nos ad deiformitatem atttaheret, misit Filium in nostram naturam, qui, cum sit homo, accedi per nos potest, ut, sicut ipse induit nostram naturam mortalem ab omni vitio separatam, sciamus nos, si vitio caruerimus, ipsum induere posse, et sic, sicut ipse factus est 'filius homini', nos fiamus filii Dei."

Christiformitas is the means of obtaining *deiformitas*. *Christiformitas* here is the imitation of Christ's virtue in replacement of one's own vice and recalls *fides caritate formata* as the process by which one attains conformity to Christ resulting in theosis. But in this connection it requires another prevalent Cusan image, the spirit of Christ. That spirit is not of the present world and so its work is "poverty according to the world of the flesh" but "abundance according to the world of the spirit."[48] He then recalls an image of that spirit proliferating in his monastic reform sermons: the sign of the spirit is the "movement or conversion to eternal desires." Just as he had at Neustift, Cusanus uses Pseudo-Dionysius to substantiate the salvific nature of this movement with recourse to *imitatio* language: "So if, as Dionysius said, we desire to pass over into God, each one should attempt to do this, that through virtues his likeness to God might be produced."[49] It is important to remember here that ascent in the Dionysian hierarchies assumes imitation of the higher orders in order to participate in the likeness which they mediate downward. Yet in this instance, the mediation is not achieved through ranks within the ecclesiastical hierarchy, but through Christ himself.[50] Cusanus's use of *christiformitas* supports the personal reform of the clergy as Christians first through conformity to Christ directly, and through Christ—who is "legate of the Father"—to the Father himself.

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[48] The use of poverty (*paupertate*) is interesting in this context since Cusanus labored arduously to oppose the fiscal extravagance of the curia, all the while living in relatively poverty himself for a cardinal—a fact he freely lamented to his contemporaries and to potential benefactors, according to Meuthen, *Nicholas of Cusa*, 134–35.

[49] "Dum sanctificatus fuero in vobis," *Sermo* 290.14, 11–15 (*h* XIX: 663): "Unde cum, ut dicit Dionysius, in Deum transire appetamus, hoc quisque agere intendit, ut similis Deo pro viribus efficiatur." Cusanus does not cite Pseudo-Dionysius directly here, but according to the critical edition conflates two different passages concerning divinization through imitation of the divine virtues.

[50] "Dum sanctificatus fuero in vobis," *Sermo* 290.15, 9–15 (*h* XIX: 664): "Nam Deus Pater mediante mediatore attrahit spiritum nostrum sicut desideratum desiderantem. Quando enim spiritus recipit verbum et doctrinam Iesu et sermones eius servat, Christum uti Dei Filium diligit et in eo Patrem, et Pater diligit ipsum per Filii dilectionem, ut habet evangelium."

It is here that he finally shifts the object of his address from the clergy *qua* Christians to the clergy *qua* clergy. He plays on the image of sanctification to move from the text he had chosen out of Ezekiel, which he applied to all Christians, to a text from 1 Peter 3 to support the visitation and reform Pius II had commissioned:

> In addition, dear brothers, let us listen to how Peter commands the Lord Jesus to be sanctified in our hearts, we who are also prepared to give reason for that which is hope and faith in us; because he ought to be understood better by us, we who are priests and teachers, we should particularly submit to this. Let us consider our most holy office, we who enjoy the legation of Christ. For he said: "as the living Father sent me, so I send you," since through the laying on of hands we receive "the spirit of Christ," indeed "of truth," so we are held to preach and to give reason for the faith." We first place it before our eyes, if we have entered rightly and with what vow and by what commission. Then, when we who have put on Christ are bound to sanctify God in the heart, that is by every effort of desire and will, and that right reason of faith and hope, which is in us, we might respond to all who ask for a reason by deed and word. For whoever interprets the faith and all the consequences for it and the sacred letters that he might desire to sanctify God with his whole heart, he has made the reasons clear.[51]

The *ratio fidei* is commanded of the clergy by Peter—no incidental authority for Cusanus—as their form of sanctification. They have committed themselves to it in vow (presumably for the regular clergy) and commission (for the secular clergy) and, in the way that all Christians are to "put on" Christ, so should the clergy through their devotion to teaching the Scriptures and the *ratio fidei.*

Cusanus further buttresses this with an appeal to authority. He had already spoken of Christ as the legate of the Father, who being "in essence and nature" equal with the Father was sent

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[51] "Dum sanctificatus fuero in vobis," *Sermo* 290.16, 1–22 (*h* XIX: 664–65): "Adhuc, fratres, attendamus, quomodo Petrus iubeat Dominum Iegum in cordibus nostris sanctificari, qui et paratos nos reddere rationem de ea, quae in nobis est spe et fide; quod, cum magis de nobis intelligi debeat, qui sacerdotes sumus et doctores, ideo aliqua de hoc subiungamus. Consideremus officium nostrum sanctissimum, qui Christi legatione utimur. Dixit enim: 'sicut misit me vivens Pater, ita mitto vos', quoniam per manus impositionem recepimus 'spiritum Christi', scilicet 'veritatis', ita quod evangelizare et rationem fidei reddere teneamur. Primum ante oculos ponamus, si recte intravimus et cum quo voto et cum qua commissione. Deinde, quomodo Christum induti teneamur Deum corde, id est omni conatu desiderii et voluntatis, sanctificare, et quod tunc rectam rationem fidei et spei, quae in nobis est, omni poscenti rationem reddamus opere et sermone. Qui enim fidem et omnia consequentia ad ipsam et sacras litteras ita interpretatur quod toto corde Deum velit sanctificare, lucidas habet rationes."

with all authority, which he paralleled with the *plenitudo potestatis* given the papal legate. If the legate has fullness of powers from the pope, he "takes on his papal nature" and has the same "indivisible papal essence."[52] Now, however, he grounds the clergy's sacerdotal office, and his reform of that office, in the legateship derived from Jesus through Peter. This is the justification for his visitation under the auspices of Pius, as he intimated in his description of the *ratio fidei*:

> Note this: For indeed Peter our patron says: "Moreover sanctify the Lord Jesus in your hearts, always be prepared to satisfy, giving response to all who ask you about that hope which is in you" and the faith, "but with modesty and fear, having a good conscience," etc. Priests represent Christ. For they are not the ones who work the sacerdotal mysteries, but Christ in them, in whom is the Father. In the priests, therefore, the spirit of the Father speaks, as Christ said: "For you are not the ones who speak, but the spirit of your Father, who speaks in you." Who baptizes, who confirms, who consecrates, who preaches in the legate as such? Certainly it is the one who sent him. Who is the spirit or the authority of the apostolic legate? Certainly Peter's, since the authority of the pope, in which is the apostolic spirit, as Jerome said that the apostolic spirit never dies in the see of Peter. For there is one authority over one see, thus the one apostolic spirit is invigorated. The apostolic spirit is of the legation of Christ. Therefore as Christ was made legate of the Father with full power of the Father – for he gave all things to him in his power –, so Christ [gave] full power to Peter. Christ gave his power similarly to the other apostles, but added to Peter the rulership saying: "You are Peter," that is, the head of the house.[53]

He uses the language of representation, so prominent in his earlier conciliar thought, to describe hierarchical authority in the church.[54] This is of course the downward movement of the

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[52] "Dum sanctificatus fuero in vobis," *Sermo* 290.10, 15–21 (*h* XIX: 661): "Sicut si papa legatum posset mittere cum plenitudine papalis potestatis, utique iste foret eius papalis naturae et non aliud in essentia et natura nec minor, sed una et eadem utriusque dignitas, auctoritas et indivisa papalitas, quae est ob suam maximitatem immultiplicabilis, licet alia foret persona mittentis et alia missi."

[53] "Dum sanctificatus fuero in vobis," *Sermo* 290.17, 1–27 (*h* XIX: 665): "Quod nota. Nam sic dicit Petrus patronus noster: 'Dominum autem Christum sanctificate in cordibus vestris, parati semper ad satisfactionem, omni poscenti vos rationem reddentes de ea quae 'in vobis est spe' et fide, 'sed cum modestia et timore, conscientiam habentes bonam' etc. Sacerdotes Christum repraesentant. Non enim ipsi sunt qui operantur sacerdotalia mysteria, sed in ipsis Christus, in quo Pater. In sacerdotibus ergo spiritus Patris loquitur, ut ait Christus: 'Non enim vos estis qui loquimini, sed spiritus Patris vestri, qui loquitur in vobis.' Quis baptizat, quis confirmat, quis consecrat, quis evangelizat in legato ut tali? Certe ille qui eum misit. Quis spiritus seu auctoritas legati apostolici? Certe Petri, quia auctoritas papae, in qua spiritus apostolicus, ut Hieronymus dicit spiritum apostolicum numquam deficere in sede Petri. Sicut enim est una auctoritas unius sedis, ita uno apostolico spiritu vegetatur. Apostolicus spiritus est legationis Christi. Sicut igitur Christus fuit legatus Patris cum plena potestate Patris—omnia enim dedit in potestate eius—sic Christus Petro plenam potestatem. Allis apostolis dedit similiter suam potestatem Christus, sed addidit Petro principatum dicendo: 'Tu es Petrus', id est caput domus."

[54] Rudolf Haubst, "Der Leitgedanke der repraesentatio in der cusanischen Ekklesiologie," *Mitteilungen und*

Dionysian hierarchies. Through it, God offers the mediation that enables the church to ascend toward participation in the Godhead and deification. In Cusanus's understanding of the priesthood, this concerns primarily the sacerdotal responsibility to sanctify God by making him known in preaching, the sacramental mysteries, and the *ratio fidei*. The legateship by which Christ makes known and sanctifies the Father devolves to the pope, who himself does the same through his legates, and Cusanus now does for the clergy in Rome as *legatus Urbi*.

The goal in all of this remains salvation, both for the clergy as Christians and for those whom they serve as legates in baptizing, confirming, and preaching. He likens the church to a "certain genealogy" of which Peter is the father, or to a "regal or sacerdotal house," of which Peter is head. The pope is the successor of this Petrine headship.[55] Despite what seems an unambiguous description of church hierarchy in authoritarian terms, he makes recourse again to the Dionysian imagery of participating in God through the sacred mediators he has instituted:

> All existing in this house have followed the divine lot, succeeding in the heredity of God, which keeps them, indeed in tithes, sacrifices, and first fruits, and they inhabit the apostolate or house of legation and they live from the goods of Christ, for which they exercise the office of the legate. For unless we become unworthy sons, we are certainly supposed to sanctify Christ in our hearts, since we are nothing without him. Let us consider what Christ does through us, how he transfers men to himself through his legates, that in him they might become adopted sons of God and his coheirs, how the sons of Adam come into conformity to Christ, how the Eucharist is the sacramental truth, where the substance of bread is transubstantiated into the body of Christ with the sensible signs remaining, and thus signifies how the faithful cross over spiritually into the mystical body of Christ. Therefore no one is able to sanctify other than Christ, who works this in us, who is also our priest. Therefore this is the sanctification, which delivers the reason of our faith to all who demand, as we give the honor of every sacramental work to Christ.[56]

Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft 9 (1971): 140–59, and Klaus Reinhardt, "Die Repräsentanz Christi und der Christgläubigen im kirchlichen Amt," *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 21 (1994): 183–210.

[55] "Dum sanctificatus fuero in vobis," *Sermo* 290.18 (*h* XIX: 665).

[56] "Dum sanctificatus fuero in vobis," *Sermo* 290.19, 1–24 (*h* XIX: 665–66): "Omnes in hac domo exsistentes divinam sortem secuti sunt, succedentes in hereditatem Dei, quam sibi servavit, scilicet in decimis, oblationibus et primitiis, et apostolicam sive legationis domum inhabitant et vivunt de bonis Christi, pro quo legationis officio funguntur. Nisi enim fuerimus degeneres filii, utique Christum in cordibus nostris sanctificare tenemur, cum nihil simus sine ipso. Consideremus quid agit per nos Christus, quomodo transfert per nos suos legatos homines ad ips

This copious section again brings together numerous themes from throughout the Brixen corpus and weaves them into the reform of the Roman clergy. The priests dwell in the house of God and live according to the *boni*—indicating more specifically the *beneficium*—of Christ with a legation from him. Nevertheless, as Christians they also seek filiation through a formed faith that expresses itself in works that sanctify God. They represent Christ as his legates. They transfer sons of Adam into sons of God. The reform Cusanus proposes is hierarchical in its source, provided one sees the principal hierarch as Christ himself, and beyond Christ in the Father of whom he is legate. That is the downward movement of the Dionysian hierarchies. He places the primary emphasis, though, on the upward movement in the hierarchy: the sacramental work of the priests, which they carry out in *christiform* obedience in order to sanctify God, provides the faithful the access to a grace through which they in turn become *christiform*, conform their lives to Christ as exemplar, and attain filiation and salvation.

Roman Basilica Visitation Sermons

The same basic themes pervade the three Roman visitation sermons Cusanus preaches, in particular the one delivered two weeks prior to the Roman synod. On January 27, 1459, only one week after Pius left for Mantua and just over two weeks after the publication of the bull charging the *legatus Urbi* with reform of the Roman basilicas, Cusanus began the visitation with a sermon at St. Peter's. He took as his text the epistle for Septuagesima, 1 Corinthians 9:24–10:4.[57] Here, it

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um, ut in ipso sint ut ipse filii Dei adoptivi et coheredes eius, quomodo filii Adae veniunt ad conformitatem Christi, quomodo eucharistia est veritas sacramentalis, ubi substantia panis transsubstantiatur in corpus Christi manentibus sensibilibus signis, et significat sic fideles transire spiritaliter in corpus Christi mysticum. Neminem igitur nisi Christum sanctificare poterimus, qui hoc in nobis operatur, cuius est et sacerdotium nostrum. Haec igitur est sanctificatio, quae omni poscenti rationem fidei nostrae redditur, quando Christo damus honorem omnium sacerdotalium operationum."

[57] He had preached an extended sermon on the same text in Brixen two years earlier, where he dealt with spiritual renewal through *christiformitas*, though mostly in an excursus on Ephesians 3,"Sic currite, ut comprehendatis," *Sermo* 268 (*fi* XIX: 467–80).

serves as the central nexus relating personal reform of the clergy to their clerical reform as canons in the basilica. Commenting on the theme from 1 Corinthians 9:24, "Run, that you may obtain," he identifies the running as a "movement" (*motus*) of the soul toward the goal he hopes to reach—the "cause of causes."[58] The rational soul is the means by which the animal body attains its end. "Thus, when we see our animal body being moved to the 'city that remains,' the heavenly city, we know this movement to be by the direction of the rational soul, which directs it spiritually."[59] He then frames faith, hope, and love as the theological virtues that direct the rational soul toward its proper end. Faith apprehends the course, hope apprehends its end, and charity enables one to follow the course and attain the end.[60] This movement of the rational soul is the elevation from the visible man to the invisible man, where the individual chooses the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love over his own desires.[61]

Cusanus continues this theme by placing the biblical virtues in the salvific horizon of *christiformitas*. He defines charity itself as the "comprehension or connection, by which the Christian is bound to divine immortality, which consists in ultimate blessedness."[62] Attaining that comprehension, however, is not the operation of the rational soul. The rational soul only knows in degrees—"it is able to know more or less"—but *felicitas* is the "end of perfection" and therefore "is not able to be more or less." Perfected charity results in the beatific vision, or

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[58] "Sic currite, ut comprehendatis," *Sermo* 289.2 (*h* XIX: 652).

[59] "Sic currite, ut comprehendatis," *Sermo* 289.3, 11–15 (*h* XIX: 653): "...ita, dum videmus animale corpus nostrum moveri ad 'manentem civitatem' caelestium civium, scimus hunc motum esse ex directione intellectualis spiritus, qui ipsum animal dirigit."

[60] "Sic currite, ut comprehendatis," *Sermo* 289.4 (*h* XIX: 653).

[61] "Sic currite, ut comprehendatis," *Sermo* 289.5 (*h* XIX: 653). He specifically cites chastity and obedience in this context, though interestingly not poverty.

[62] "Sic currite, ut comprehendatis," *Sermo* 289.6, 1–3 (*h* XIX: 654): "...comprehensio seu nexus, quo christianus nectitut divinae immortalitati, in quo consistit ultima felicitas."

perfect comprehension.[63] Temporally, however, the Spirit has made known the gospel—the "proclamation of the Son of God"—that leads to *felicitas*. This is the final goal of what one runs to obtain, namely, the participation in the gospel.[64] The beatific vision is the end of love and it is attained by the Spirit moving the rational soul through the gospel. And what is the connection between the Spirit and charity? *Christiformitas*—the attribute of those who have a faith formed by love:

> Charity therefore, which is the doctrine of Christ, "is diffused into the hearts of the *christiform* through the Holy Spirit," as the apostle said. Behold what is different among the living Christian who has the spirit of charity and is free from the spirit of death. There are those who have Christ as in the sensible flesh, that is, in unformed faith, who believe all things which are spoken of Christ in the gospel, like even the demons who tremble, but do not have the living Christ, which is not life in sense, but in the rational soul or recoverable intellect.[65]

The interpolation of *christform*—even the Heidelberg critical edition overlooks it and includes the adjective in its citation of Romans 5:5—as an attribute of hearts that have received charity through the Spirit is significant. It suggests that for Cusanus *christiformitas* pertains to those who have achieved a formed faith, indeed a formed faith only possible through the presence of the Spirit.[66] The *christiform* are those who form their faith with love expressed in good works, and as

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[63] "Sic currite, ut comprehendatis," *Sermo* 289.6, 20–26 (*h* XIX: 654): "Unde sicut quamdiu rern non vidimus, nobis gradus ultimae sensibills cognitionis deficit, ita quamdiu tantum scimus veritatem et ipsam non videmus visione illa, quae est ultima fruitiva cognitio, nondum ad finem desideriorum attigimus."

[64] "Sic currite, ut comprehendatis," *Sermo* 289.7, 16–22 (*h* XIX: 655): "Evangelium igitur est divina doctrina Christi Filii Dei, quae sic potest capi quod quis illius doctrinae particeps fiat, et per doctrinae participationem intellectualis natura fit sciens supra suam naturam, scilicet divina scientia, quae, cum moveat intellectum, spiritualis naturae est; spiritus enim motor est."

[65] "Sic currite, ut comprehendatis," *Sermo* 289.8, 1–11 (*h* XIX: 655): "Caritas igitur, quae est doctrlna Christi, 'est diffusa in cordibus christiformium per Spiritum Sanctum', ut sit apostolus. Ecce quae est differentia inter vivum christianum habentem spiritum caritatis et mortuum spiritu carentem. Sunt qui Christum habent quasi in sensibili corpore, scilicet in fide informi, qui credunt omnia quae de Christo loquitur evangelium, sicut et daemones, qui contremiscunt, sed non habent Christum vivum, quae vita non est in sensu sed in spiritu rationali seu intellectu receptibilis."

[66] It furthermore implies the distinction, cited much earlier in his missive to Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo some seventeen years earlier, between a sensible, institutional church and a true, mystical church within it, *Epistula ad Rodericum Sancium de Arevalo*, 4–5; Izbicki, *Writings on Church and Reform*, 434–35. See also Izbicki, "Church in the Light,"198–99.

a result attain eternal blessedness. The presence of the Spirit is evinced by the *christiform* desire for obedience. That "movement of desire" is *christiform* for those who are "inclined toward the obedience of God so much that [they] burn to obey the divine precepts even to death."[67]

The language and imagery he uses here is identical to his introduction of the 1457 visitation at Neustift, which itself was a sharpening of earlier monastic reform sermons with *christiformitas* in order to exhort the religious to adhere to their rule as a consequence of their personal conformity to Christ. He will use that language and imagery for the same purpose in the remainder of this visitation sermon. Yet here he has a familiar point at which to adapt the argument to the canons present. He first addresses the question of how someone who might not perceive (*sentit*) the Spirit himself should proceed. He urges him to "attend to his calling and proceed in it more diligently," since it is the means by which the one running obtains the end for which he runs. Every Christian has a "course" to run in order to reach the goal; for the canon, that course is as a canon.[68] This course, then, implies observance of the rule:

> If anyone doubts how the canon ought to run, to which he should consider the names: the Greek 'canon' is called in Latin 'regula.' The canon, called by the rule, ought to live, move, and run in observance of the rules or canons. The rule is the measure of rectitude and justice. Therefore the canon should measure [himself], if he makes his course rightly, by the observance of canons. Because should he find it, he would know himself to be on the path of comprehension.[69]

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[67] "Sic currite, ut comprehendatis," *Sermo* 290.9, 3–9 (*ñ* XIX: 655): "In te experiri poteris ex motu desiderii, scilicet si motus tui desiderii est christiformis, puta quando motus desiderii est ad oboedientiam Dei in tantum inclinatus, quod tu usque ad mortem ardes divinis praeceptis parere et gaudes in omni adversitate quam pateris, ut ei solum placeas."

[68] "Sic currite, ut comprehendatis," *Sermo* 289.10, 5–10 (*ñ* XIX: 656): "Nam ait apostolus: 'Sic currite, ut comprehendatis.' Loquitur ad currentem qui tendit ad finem, sicut canonicus ad finem currere debet taliter, ut comprehendat. In omni cursu christiani est via, quae dirigit ad comprehensionem. Vocati estis, ut curratis sicut canonici. Sic igitur currite."

[69] "Sic currite, ut comprehendatis," *Sermo* 289.11, 1–10 (*ñ* XIX: 656): "Si dubitat aliquis, quomodo canonicus currere debeat, ad quid nominis respiciat: 'canon' graece 'regula' latine dicitur. Canonicus, a regula dictus, in regularum seu canonum observantia vivere, moveri et currere debet. Regula est mensura rectitudinis et iustitiae. Mensuret igitur canonicus, si cursum suum recte facit, ex canonum observantia. Quod si sic invenerit, sciat se in via comprehensionis esse."

Such "rectitude" consists in opposing the three principal lusts of arrogance, avarice, and luxury with the canonical vows. These serve as countervailing forces to the movement of concupiscence: "...through the rule of obedience the movement of elation and arrogance is dominated, avarice through the rule of poverty, and luxury through the rule of chastity."[70] The counsels of perfection (*regula evangelica*) apply to all Christians, but in a specific way to the obligations of the canon: to commit himself to "sacred works" and to prayer.[71] He again cites the example of Christ being obedient "to death, even death on a cross" and thereby overcoming the world, that the canon might seek as a Christian to do the same in observing his rule, no matter the obstacle.[72] This then is the goal of his visitation: "And since not all are obedient to the gospel, the visitation and direction is necessary for me, that you might hear from the reading of the apostolic bull, committed to me for your health."[73] As he had in Brixen, Cusanus presents observance of the canons as his goal for reform. But as he also had in the Brixen sermons, he employs *christiformitas* to present a vision of reform that addresses the canons first as Christians, then as canons whose proper course in life is observance of the rule.

The remaining visitation sermons, both preached after the Roman synod, share the same salvific overtones, though they address the clergy's vocational obligations more circumspectly. The first of those, preached at St. John Lateran on February 23, does not speak of pastoral reform directly. However, Cusanus seems to implicate the clergy in his theme for the day, the parable of

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[70] "Sic currite, ut comprehendatis," *Sermo* 289.12, 5–9 (*h* XIX: 656): "Et per regulam obedientiae dominator mouit elationis et superbiae, per regulam paupertatis avaritiae et per regulam castitatis luxuriae."

[71] "Sic currite, ut comprehendatis," *Sermo* 289.13 (*h* XIX: 656).

[72] "Sic currite, ut comprehendatis," *Sermo* 289.14, 7–10 (*h* XIX: 657): "Omnia igitur verus agonista linquit, etiam et animam seu vitam suam, ut assequatur bravium verae immortalitatis seu incorruptibilem coronam."

[73] "Sic currite, ut comprehendatis," *Sermo* 289.15, 1–4 (*h* XIX: 657): "Et quoniam non omnes oboediunt evangelio, visitatio et direetio necessaria est mihi, ut audistis ex lectione apostolicae bullae, pro vestra salute mihi commissa..."

the wicked tenants in Matthew 21. He opens the homily by acknowledging the pope's bull to reform the basilicas ("You have heard, brothers, that our holy and great pontiff, Pius II, commissioned our visitation of the principal churches of the city"), then interprets the parable using customary Cusan imagery.[74] The father who planted the vineyard symbolizes God and provides a means of understanding divine *paternitas* through which one ascends from "image to exemplar."[75] The vineyard itself represents creation, into which God planted the intellect.[76] The reason for creation and the "end and perfection of that which is planted" is fellowship (*consortium*) with the Father. Here he cites the same idea in Pseudo-Dionysius's *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* that he had used in the Roman synodal homily: "Thus the first intellect plants the intellectual nature that its perfection might pass into fellowship with his divinity."[77]

Cusanus then shifts his interpretation of the metaphor to Jesus's condemnation of the Israelite priests, which would seemingly imply a more direct correlation with the canons. He describes the earthly city of Jerusalem as the historical location of the vineyard, the "intellectual natures worshipping God" as the "divine field," and the priests as the farmers or tenants (*agricoli*) given care of the vineyard.[78] He then references another favorite image for pastoral reform, that of the mercenaries or hirelings, to describe the wicked priests of Israel. The "farmers" are the "hirelings" who were given "care of the vineyard," but they "persecuted and

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[74] "Homo erat pater familias," *Sermo* 291.1, 1–3 (*h* XIX: 668): "Audistis, fratres, Pium II, sanctum atque maximum pontificem nostrum, nobis visitatione huius primae urbis ecclesiae commisisse."

[75] "Homo erat pater familias," *Sermo* 291.2, 1–6 (*h* XIX: 668): "Primum ex textu eliciamus Deum in patre familias figurari, qui plantat vineam et locat agricolis pro fructu. Quae est autem via de patre familias ad creatorem ascendendi quasi de imagine ad exemplar: In simplici patre familias multiplex paternitas coincidit."

[76] "Homo erat pater familias," *Sermo* 291.4 (*h* XIX: 669).

[77] "Homo erat pater familias," *Sermo* 291.5, 11–13 (*h* XIX: 670): "Sic primus intellectus plantat intellectualem naturam, ut perfectio eius transeat in consortium divinitatis eius." Cusanus had in an earlier Brixen homily used the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* to describe the "synaxis or communion" Christ has with the mystical body through the Eucharist. Cf. "Qui manducat hunc panem vivet in aeternum," *Sermo* 189.6 (*h* XVIII: 360).

[78] "Homo erat pater familias," *Sermo* 291.6 (*h* XIX: 670).

killed" the "true servants," such as the "saints and preachers and prophets."[79] Yet he resists the temptation to apply it to the canons at St. John Lateran. It is only in conclusion that Cusanus suggests any relation whatsoever between the wicked tenants of the vineyard and the need to reform the church. He calls the clergy "farmers, who by a certain agreement receive the lent out property, paid out or paid off by the fruit or the *canone*." If they do not carry out their responsibilities and instead "eject the word of Christ," as the tenants did, then they risk being "ejected through him [whom] we rejected."[80] His reproach remains somewhat oblique. It is subordinate to his larger goal of placing personal reform of the clergy into the horizon of conformity to Christ, which he had already addressed at synod and suggested again with reference to the relation between God as planter of the vineyard and the rational soul as the vineyard itself planted for *consortium* with the God.

The final sermon, preached March 6 at *Sancta Maria Maggiore*, is a more extensive treatment of personal reform of the clergy, with no less circumspection than its immediate predecessor at St. John Lateran. The theme is taken from the Gospel for the Tuesday after Laetere Sunday, Jesus teaching at the temple in John 7. He begins the sermon by again calling attention to Pius's bull and to the recent synod, then underscores the significance of Christ as both word of God and the teacher of that word. Those who received this word were teachable (*dociles*) and insatiable (*avidi*). Then he posits an important difference between the one who is

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[79] "Homo erat pater familias," *Sermo* 291.7, 3–10 (*fi* XIX: 671): "Possumus agricolas intelligere esse illos mercennarios, de quo alibi Christus dicit, quibus locata est cum pacto solutionis pensionis cura vineae; servos vero illos, qui sunt de domestica familia Dei, uti sunt sancti et praedicatores et prophetae, qui mittuntur ad colligendum fructum, qui loco collectionis fructuum percutiuntu et interficiuntur."

[80] "Homo erat pater familias," *Sermo* 291.10, 1–10 (*fi* XIX: 672): "Haec sic ad nostrum exordium sufficiant, ut sciamus, quomodo nos, qui non sumus domini vineae sed agricolae, qui certo pacto recepimus locationem pro fructu solvendo seu pensu sive canone, si non solverimus et parvifecerimus nos admonentes, etiam verbum Dei eicientes et, quantum in nobis est, rursum crucifigentes, eiciemur per ipsum quem decimus et perdemur et honore privabimur regii sacerdotii et conquassabimur et comminuemur."

the word and those who receive it. Christ is the maximum, man is the minimum; while men differ in degree, Christ is absolute.[81] This distinction enables him to frame *christiformitas* as an image for the intellective conformity of the individual to Christ:

> And note this, namely that we have the concrete possibility of perfection, according to which we are not able to dispose ourselves, that we might be more perfect, but we are not able to lead ourselves from potency to act. For there is nothing that is able to move itself from potency to act, although the power is placed into the act through acting, as the power of heat by the acting is placed into the act, indeed through fire the heat may be heated by the act of fire. Moreover the summit of perfection of the disciple is that he might be like his master. The summit of the intellectual nature is that it might be conformed to the word or divine intellect. Therefore no other teacher is able to lead our intellectual nature to the summit of perfection other than the word of God. Therefore no man is able to be happy unless he is *christiform*. No spirit is happy unless conformed to the spirit of Christ.[82]

In this context, the rational soul is oriented toward intellective conformity with Christ as teacher. *Christiformitas* is the attainment of this end. But Cusanus sees a contrast in the pericope between the divine speech of the word of God himself and the human speech which the Jews in the temple supposed Christ to articulate. Christ is the maximal intellect, in whom there is no need for further knowledge, because he has received all knowledge from the Father. Christ's doctrine is not his own, "but of the one sending."[83] This enables him to make recourse again to the language of legateship. Christ is the legate and his doctrine from the Father who speaks through him precisely because he is by "essence and nature" God, "consubstantial with the one who does the

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[81] "Iam autem die festo mediante," *Sermo* 292.3, 27–33 (*h* XIX: 674): "Maximum autem, quo non potest esse maius, actu est omnia, quoniam in sua maximitate omnia actu complicat, quae sunt possibilia magis et minus recipientibus. Unde ab illa maximitate seu plenitudine omnis possibilitas perfectionis perducitur et perficitur."

[82] "Iam autem die festo mediante," *Sermo* 292.4, 1–17 (*h* XIX: 674): "Et hoc nota, scilicet nos habere concreatam possibilitatem perfectionis, secundum quam disponere nos possumus, ut simus perfectiores, sed nos non poterimus nos ipsos ducere de potentia in actum. Nihil enim in potentia se ipsum potest ponere in actu, cum potentia per actum ponatur in actu, sicut potentia calidum per actum ponitur in actu, scilicet per ignem actu calidum fit posse calefieri actu calidum. Summitas autem perfectionis discipuli est, ut sit sicut magister suus. Summitas intellectualis naturae est, ut sit conformis verbo seu intellectui divino. Non potest igitur intellectualem nos tram naturam alius quicumque magister ducere ad summam suam perfectionem nisi verbum Dei. Nullus igitur homo potest esse felix nisi christiformis. Nullus spiritus felix nisi conformis spiritui Christi."

[83] "Iam autem die festo mediante," *Sermo* 292.6 (*h* XIX: 675).

sending."[84] Legateship in this sense is not an authoritarian image, but an intellective one; it refers to the hypostatically united maximum and minimum of Christ, the object of the individual's intellective conformity. This becomes doubly applicable for the cleric since he conforms to Christ not only for his personal salvation, but also as a teacher whose doctrine likewise must conform to what Christ has taught.

The point comes even clearer as Cusanus continues his exposition of the pericope. The Jews accused Christ of transgressing the law by healing on the Sabbath, but because they did not know who he was they failed to see that as the legate of the Father Jesus was the divine law personified, and so above positive law. The Jews perceived and judged Christ according to external appearance and lied against him, thereby conforming to the "father of lies" himself, because "all liars pass into the likeness of the devil."[85] Christ, however, is apprehended by faith. Belief in Christ is necessary, but a belief secured by the one who delivers this message. Jesus bore witness to himself as "Son of God and legate of God" that he might enable sinners to acquire filiation through him.[86] Furthermore, in his death he provided access to that filiation and an image of himself as exemplar for obedience, again making reference to Philippians 2:

> It was right for Christ to show this in himself, indeed that the Son of God was without sin, and himself would be obedient to the will of the Father even to death on a cross, and thus the glorious resurrection from the dead would be reported and he would enter glory, that all of his believers might become partakers of death and partakers of resurrection. Moreover, that believer, who established by a perfect will is captivated by conformity to Christ, wants to be obedient even to death, then he has crossed into participation of the death of Christ, even if he does not happen to suffer the sensible death of the martyrs, he is certain to be holy like St. Martin and other confessors.[87]

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[84] "Iam autem die festo mediante," *Sermo* 292.7, 19–22 (*h* XIX: 676): "Tunc enim mittens de tota sua essentia et natura mittit missum. Ideo dicitur Filius, quia habet esse rationale et coessentiale mittentis."

[85] "Iam autem die festo mediante," *Sermo* 292.17, 5–6 (*h* XIX: 679): "Transeunt igitur in similitudinem diaboli omnes mendaces." Telling here is the use of a verb he has repeatedly cited in relation to Pseudo-Dionysius's notion of mystical ascent.

[86] "Iam autem die festo mediante," *Sermo* 292.20 (*h* XIX: 679).

[87] "Iam autem die festo mediante," *Sermo* 292.21, 1–13 (*h* XIX: 680): "Haec oportebat Christum in se

The desire to imitate Christ's martyrdom is itself a *christiform* desire for conformity to him. It is the goal for clergy and laity alike, for the secular clergy and the regular clergy just the same. All Christians seek the end of conformity to Christ through active obedience of the will in whatever estate they find themselves.

While all four Roman sermons have different emphases, different audiences, and different venues, they share several common features. In each, Cusanus seeks to reform the clergy personally as Christians, just as he had in Brixen. He employs *christiformitas* as the controlling metaphor for this reform, whereby all Christians imitate Christ in order to obtain likeness to him through deification and ultimately perfect knowledge of him in the beatific vision. The clergy fulfill their vocations through the imitation of Christ, which in turn leads them to carry out their pastoral responsibilities as legates to the faithful. Through this mediation comes the knowledge of Christ, that the faithful might in turn conform themselves to him. While this latter relation is still implicit, he will make it explicit in his reform proposal.

1459 *Reformatio Generalis*

The precise historical details surrounding the origin and reception of the *Reformatio generalis* remain something of a mystery. There are several extant forms, giving plausibility to Meuthen's claim that the first draft is no longer extant.[88] There is no confirmed date of its drafting, nor is there any other account of its immediate influence outside of Pius's own

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ostendere, scilicet quia Filius Dei sine peccato esset. et se voluntarie Patri usque ad mortem crucis oboediturum. Et sic reportaturum gloriosam a morte resurrectionem et gloriam intraturum, quodque omnis fidelis illius mortis particeps fieret et resurrectionis particeps. Ille autem fidelis, qui consummata voluntate statuit usque ad mortem inclusive conformiter Christo velle oboedire, iam transivit in participationem mortis Christi, etiam si ipsum non contingeret martyrium sensibile pati, uti de sancto Martino et allis confessoribus sanctis certum est."

[88] Erich Meuthen, "Neue Schlaglichter auf das Leben des Nikolaus von Kues," *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 4 (1964), 49–50.

unpublished bull.[89] There have been numerous treatments of the proposal since Ludwig Pastor first addressed it, and, for all the elusiveness of its original form, the details of those interpretations do not differ markedly. What studies of the *Reformatio generalis* have not done is reveal the dependence of its formulation on the sermons delivered in Cusanus's early 1459 Roman reform sermons and, *a fortiori*, on the Brixen sermons.[90] The reform tract, in particular its overlooked preface, draws together the strands of church and reform he expresses throughout these numerous *ad status* sermons into a coherent theological vision for reform of the church beginning with its papal "eyes." This section will analyze three specific dicussions in the treatise—the preface, rules for visitation, and reform of the papacy and curia—with attention to the images of reform in his proposal and their lineages in the Brixen and Roman sermons.

Theological Preface (*RG* 1–7)

The preface itself was presumably spoken in Cusanus's own voice rather than in the pope's, unlike the rest of the proposal, and is a concise summary of his larger principles of church and reform.[91] His primary concern at this stage is to establish the need for reform, which he does through a personification of the church as a mystical body. The church as body requires conformity to its head, and this occurs through the personal reform of the members constituting it. He opens with specific allusions to various ideas expressed in the Roman sermons. Human beings have been created with intellectual natures that are "teachable" (*dociles*) so they can participate in God by obtaining knowledge of him. They are able to know something about God

[89] Haubst, "Der Reformentwurf," 188–242. Ehses does trace its influence out at Trent, Ehses, "Der Reformentwurf," 276–77.

[90] For exceptions, see above, n. 9.

[91] Pastor explained the preface as representative of medieval attempts to ground particular reforms in general principles, but this fails to do justice to both the theological basis Cusanus lays there and the continuities it shares with his reform sermons, Pastor, *History of the Popes*, 3:269.

conjecturally through creation, but they know nothing truly apart from Christ, who is the "speech or word of God."[92] God is the "end of desires" and, in order for the rational soul or intellectual nature to obtain that end, he sent a teacher in Jesus to "destroy ignorance." Christ came in his first advent as "son and legate" of the Father and "in his name" that those who receive Christ "become sons" of the Father. Furthermore, "Christ chose disciples from the world and built the church from the faithful themselves, which grows and lives by his doctrine and spirit, in which it remains for all time. So there is one faith in that church of his, of which he is head."[93] On the basis of this summary of sin and salvation through the revelation of Christ preserved in the church, he can now address the basis for reform of that church. As with the rest of his later reform thought, he deploys *christiformitas* to that end. There is no need for "any other faith or any other forms" than those which the "rectors of the church" have already received through "Christ the head" and the "holy apostles and their successors." The church commits itself to works in conformity with that form given it, that it "might become *christiform*," "heirs of God," and "coheirs with Christ." The faithful "put on the form of God," apart from which "it is not possible for man to attain the reign of immortality." He adds: "This form is acquired by imitation. Thus said the apostle, addressing the one in whom Christ is formed: 'Be imitators of God like dearest sons'; and elsewhere: 'Be imitators of me as I am of Christ'; and again: Be imitators of me, brothers, and observe those who walk, that you might have our form'."[94] In this

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[92] *Reformatio Generalis* 1 (*ñ* XV: 20). All translations are mine from the critical edition. An English translation is available in Izbicki, *Writings on Church and Reform*, 551–91.

[93] *Reformatio Generalis* 2, 11–21 (*ñ* XV: 21): "Misit igitur deus 'verbum caro factum', dilectum filium suum 'plenum gratia veritate', mandans eum audiri, dans potestatem omnibus, qui ipsum reciperent, filios suos fieri, 'his qui credunt in nomine eius'. Et hoc est unicum dei patris praeceptum, scilicet ipsi sui filio et legato, qui et verbum eius, credere scilicet 'in nomine eius'. Qui enim ipsum ut talem recipit, utique in ipsum credit et scit omnia quae annuntiat vera esse, quia filius et verbum dei. Venit itaque Christus et elegit de mundo discipulos et aediificavit ecclesiam ex sibi fidelibus, quae eius doctrina et spiritu vegetatur et vivit, in qua omni tempore manebit. Est itaque fidelium unio in ipso ecclesia eius, cuius ipse caput."

[94] *Reformatio Generalis* 3, 1–25 (*ñ* XV: 23): "Quoniam autem ecclesiam dei iam 'super' firmam 'petram'

pivotal section, he highlights numerous images of church and reform. The church as mystical body has its headship in Christ and it in turn devolves to the apostles and their successors, but with a precise purpose: that "all might become *christiform*." This applies to all Christians, "each one in his own own place (*ordine*)," calling to mind the ecclesiastical orders of Pseudo-Dionysius.

Cusanus uses the ecclesial character of *christiformitas* to shape clergy themselves to that image. The clergy are exemplars to the faithful in the same way as Christ is an exemplar for them. He applies the image first to the papacy: "Therefore we who have followed in the place of the apostles, in order that we might put the form of Christ on others, it is necessary to be *christiform* before the others."[95] With this, he can base a general reform of the church on a reformed papacy capable of exemplifying Christ to all the faithful: "Therefore we who desire to reform all Christians, we can put forward no other form to them to imitate than Christ, from whom they have received their name." This "name" is the "living law and perfect form" according to which the "blessed sons of life conform themselves." They receive eternal life, but the "deformed" (*difformes*) receive "eternal judgment." Through penitence, the faithful—including the pope—"put back on the form of innocence" received in baptism.[96] Numerous

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optime fundatam' regendam recepimus, non circa aliam fidem neque alias formas, quam a Christo capite et sanctis apostolis atque eorum successoribus, ecclesiae rectoribus, recepimus, inquirere necessitamur; sed tantum operam dare tenemur, ut, quanto superno dono fieri conceditur – abiecta pravi huius mundi concupiscentia, quae non est de regno Christi; transibit enim 'mundus' iste 'et concupiscentia eius' –, omnes christiformes efficiamur et 'quisque in ordine suo', ut sic simus 'heredes dei' in participatione regni immortalis vitae et ipsius 'Christi' dei unici filii 'coheredes'. Ipse enim, 'cum in forma dei esset', 'qui solum' inhabitat 'immortalitatem', nostram assumpsit mortalem naturam servilemque formam, ut ipsam sic suae divinae naturae uniret quod in eius immortalitatis formam transiret. Unde cum una sit humanitatis natura Christi capitis nostri et nostra, quae in ipso solo formam dei induit, non est possibile hominem ad regnum immortalitatisaliter posse pertingere, nisi ipsius Christi domini formam induat. Haec forma imitatione acquiritur. Unde ait apostolus, in quo Christus formatus loquebatur: 'Estote imitatores dei sicuti filii carissimi'; et alibi: 'imitatores mei estote sicut et ego christi' et iterum: 'Imitatores mei estote, fratres, et observate eos, qui ita ambulant, sicut habetis formam nostram'."

[95] *Reformatio Generalis* 4, 1–3 (*h* XV: 24): "Qui igitur in locum apostolorum successimus, ut alios nostra imitatione formam Christi induamus, utique prioriter aliis christiformes esse necesse est."

[96] *Reformatio Generalis* 5, 1–11 (*h* XV: 27): "Nos igitur, qui cunctos christianos reformare cupimus, utique

images come together again here. If the successors of the apostles in pope and curia would see to the reform of the church, they must start by reforming themselves. They should repent and return to their original form as examples for the faithful to do the same. They should put off the flesh and put on the form of Christ so that all might do likewise. Reform begins with the rectors of the church reforming themselves according to the image of Christ.

Cusanus next extends this personal reform of the papacy and cardinals to their role in reforming the whole body. He, in effect, personifies the mystical body as a sinful human in need of reform. The church is not an institution or structure, neither hierarchical nor egalitarian, but a mystical and salvific personage with unstable health:

> Since moreover the church of God is the mystical body of Christ, rightly compared to the body of man by the apostle, in which "by the vivifying spirit" all members are united that they might live, as in the entire body of the church all members might be vivified by the spirit of Christ to whom all the faithful in this world adhere through faith. Moreover the diversity of the members of the church is constrained by that bond of love or glue of Christ and the diverse offices are appointed "for the edification of the church"; and are "members of a member," of which whatever is contained is that which is to be, provided that it is present by the spirit of vivification. Moreover there are eyes, through which individual members are visited and they are fit for their office; and if those eyes should be clear, "the whole body will be clear." For they visit the body and the individual members and they do not allow any dark foulness or baseness to adhere to them. If indeed the eye should be dark, "the whole body will be dark." In the church therefore if the eyes, who should be "lights of the body," are dark, then by this it is certain that the "whole body" is "dark."[97]

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aliam nullam possumus eis formam quam imitentur proponere quam Christi, a quo nomen receperunt. Illa est lex viva et forma perfecta, in qua fit iudicium vitae et mortis aeternae. Conformes ei sunt filii vitae benedicti, qui vocantur ad possessionem regni dei. Difformes vero, quia filii mortis maledicti, 'in gehennam' abicientur. Esse igitur debet omne studium nostrum, ut abluamur paenitentia et reinduamus formam innocentiae, quam in lavacro Christi recepimus. Tunc enim, quando 'Christus in gloria dei patris' 'apparuerit, similes ei erimus', eiusdem scilicet formae, quae solum in regno dei ad quod tendimus reperitur."

[97] *Reformatio Generalis* 6, 1–17 (*h* XV: 28): "Quoniam autem ecclesia dei est corpus Christi mysticum, recte per apostolum corpus hominis ei assimilatur, in quo 'in spiritu vivificante' omnia membra uniuntur ut vivant, sicut in toto corpore ecclesiae spiritu Christi omnia membra vivificantur, cui in hoc mundo omnes fideles per fidem adhaerent. Diversitas autem membrorum ecclesiae quodam amoris vinculo sive glutino Christi constringitur, et diversa sortiuntur officia 'in aedificationem corporis'; et sunt 'membra de membro', quorum quodlibet contentatur id esse quod est, dummodo adsit spiritui vivificanti. Sunt autem oculi, per quae singula membra visitantur et ad sua official adaptantur; et illi oculi si lucidi fuerint, 'totum corpus lucidum erit'. Nam visitant corpus et singula membra et non sinunt aliquam foeditatem aut turpitudinem tenebrosam ipsis adhaerere. Si vero oculus fuerit tenebrosus, 'totum corpus tenebrosum erit'. In ecclesia igitur si oculi, qui 'lucerna corporis' esse debent, tenebra sunt, utique ex hoc certum est 'totum corpus' esse 'tenebro sum'."

The church is personified as a human person in need of health and restitution.[98] There are diverse members in the body held together by a common bond, which is Christ. The spirit of that Christ in turn creates diverse members with different functions through which the church is vivified and remains healthy. These members are commissioned for the *aedificatio ecclesiae*—a sure sign of the papacy in Cusan ecclesiological terms. As the eyes of the church, pope and curia have a distinct function since they are the organs through which the body sees. The health of the entire body depends upon the ability of the eyes to see. They visit the rest of the members to insure the body's health. He then appeals to more recent discontent with the *status ecclesiae* to argue that those eyes do in fact need reform themselves. The church as body of Christ "has at this time declined gravely from the light and is covered by obscuring shadows" and as such the eyes "have degenerated into darkness." More importantly, the eyes of the mystical body have no way to visit and reform themselves. What they now require is other visitors—the eyes need another set of eyes to look upon them and help them reform.[99]

Cusanus then sets out his *propositio* for the visitation of pope and curia in order to reform them as the church's eyes. He proposes two measures to this end. First, the pope and curia as eyes should submit "to those having healthy vision," lest they deceive themselves and lead the church to "ruin." Second, upon being visited, pope and curia should—either themselves or through their representatives (*nostras vices gerentes*)—"turn clear eyes on the whole body of the

[98] On the medical dimensions of the organic metaphor in late medieval thought, see Cary J. Nederman, "The Physiological Significance of the Organic Metaphor in John of Salisbury's Policraticus," *History of Political Thought* 8 (1987): 211–23; Takashi Shogimen, "'Head or Heart?' Revisited: Physiology and Political Thought in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," *History of Political Thought* 28 (2007): 208–29; and Takashi Shogimen, "Medicine and the Body Politic in Marsilius of Padua's *Defensor pacis*," in *A Companion to Marsilius of Padua*, ed. Gerson Moreno-Riaño and Cary J. Nederman (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2012), 71–116.

[99] *Reformatio Generalis* 6, 20–24 (*h* XV: 29): "Et quoniam oculus, qui aliorum maculas videt, suas non videt, ideo oculus se visitare nequit; sed oportet, ut se subiciat alteri visitatori, qui ipsum visitet, corrigat et mundet, ut sic aptus fiat ad visitandum corporis membra."

church and visit the individual members." The visitation, then, begins with the "Roman church and curia" and then proceeds through visitors sent to "individual provinces."[100] To this end, he proposes delegating the task to three "serious and mature men, in whom the form of Christ (*forma Christi*) shines brightly."[101] The reform of pope and curia, however, is not primarily concerned with institutional measures such as questions of jurisdiction, but rather begins first with the personal reform of the higher clergy. This follows from his broader principles enunciated throughout the preface, indeed throughout the Brixen and Roman sermons. The goal of personal reform is *christiformitas*, the imitation of Christ through conformity to his virtues. The mystical body is a personification of the church as an individual Christian; in the sam way that personal reform applies to each individual, so should it apply to the church as a whole.

Rules for Visitation (*RG* 8–21)

Building upon the theological preface and its personification of the mystical body with curial eyes in need of reform, Cusanus addresses the reform of the members under the auspices of those eyes. He lays out fourteen rules for visitation that follow from these basic assumptions, including observance of canon law and pontifical decree, reduction of absenteeism and pluralism, enclosure of nuns, stewardship of churches and hospitals, and devotional and liturgical reform. They reflect his understanding of the reform of the higher clergy as essential for the general reform of the church in its members, that is, its local diocesan and monastic expressions.

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[100] *Reformatio Generalis* 6, 25–36 (*fi* XV: 30): "Duo igitur elicimus in nostro proposito necessaria, scilicet quod nos, qui oculi sumus, subiciamus nos sanum visum habentibus, ne nobis ipsis – quasi lucidos oculos habeamus – credentibus decipiamur in nostram et ecclesiae per nos visitandae perniciem. Secundo quod post hoc in totum ecclesiae corpus lucidos oculos convertamus et singula membra per nos aut nostras vices gerentes sollerter visitemus tamquam deo de nostro officio credita ecclesia et animab us omnium districtam rationem reddituri, nisi omnem possibilem in hoc fecerimus diligentiam. Et in hoc a nostra ecclesia Romana et curia incipiemus et consequenter visitatores ad singulas provincias mittemus. Regulas autem, quas tenere debent visitatores, qui nostras vices agent, hic annotare decrevimus."

[101] *Reformatio Generalis* 7, 1–2 (*fi* XV: 30): "Tres volumus eligere et deputare visitatores, graves et maturos viros, in quibus forma Christi clare resplendeat..."

He first directs the visitors to attend to devotion and ceremonies in the church, that they are carried out with all due fear of God and solemnity. They are to study the customs, establish a "better form" (*meliorem formam*) if necessary, and examine individuals. Above all, they are to present the churches with the example of obedience to Christ (*eis formam Christi praeponentes*).[102] The visitors reform those being visited so all estates within the body might return to the first form placed on them in baptism. Reform then rectifies the deformity (*difformitam*) in all according to their own respective estates: all Christians according to the "form which they put on in baptism, when they became Chirstians," prelates according to the form they put on when becoming prelates, and so forth for kings and princes, priests and the beneficed, and all other officials who received something in addition to the "form of baptism."[103] As he had in the monastic visitation sermons and to a lesser degree in the synodal sermons and earlier Roman sermons, he essentially inverts the counsels of perfection again. All Christians, regardless of estate, should return to the form placed on them in baptism, only in the case of some there are additional forms to which they should comport. These are all secondary, however, to the form placed upon the Christian at baptism.

Cusanus considers specifically the clerical estate in this connection. As he maintained earlier in the preface, the visitors need not introduce new forms, but rather enforce those already in place, in particular canon law and the pontifical decretals. If clerics do not conform to these

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[102] *Reformatio Generalis* 8 (*h* XV: 31).

[103] *Reformatio Generalis* 9, 8–22 (*h* XV: 32): "Ex quo instruimur difformitatem illam, scilicet quod 'non est veritas iudicium' in populo christiano, esse proprie transgressionem constituti et iuramentorum. Ideo volumus quod ipsi visitatores curam habere debeant reformandos ad formam primam reducere, puta generaliter omnes christianos ad formam, quam induerunt in baptismate, dum fierent christiani; praelatos ultra hoc ad formam quam receperunt, dum fierent praelati; reges et principes similiter ad formam, quam tempore suae constitutionis induerunt; sic de sacerdotibus et beneficiatis, sic de religiosis et generaliter de omnibus officialibus et aliis, qui ultra formam baptismatis, ad quam se, ut christiani essent, sollemniter astrinxerunt."

standards, they risk expulsion from their standing.[104] He again underscores the significance of one's name. The canon should attend to the "etymology of his name" because it binds him to the lifestyle which the name specifies. Where his life accords with a different name, he "is indeed named falsely and is unworthy of the name."[105] Clergy who fail to comply with the *iuramenta et vota* to which they once pledged themselves belie the office from which they receive their names. The same is true more broadly for all:

> For how can anyone be rightly called a Christian, whose life is opposed to Christ? Or the religious, who is apostate, the monk who wanders into the world, the canon who is not observant (*irregularis*), the priest who is profane, the cleric who flees care, the rector who is absent, the bishop who does not oversee the commissioned flock, the commander who is a seducer, the king who is a tyrant?[106]

Conformity to one's name is the logical consequence of entering that vocation. Far from tautological, the name of the estate obligates one to certain responsibilities and the unwillingness to comply with those expectations likewise implies one's rejection of the estate.

Next, he addresses disciplinary reforms in connection with pastoral care and worship. It is worth remembering that pastoral care in his earlier reform sermons has to do with leading the faithful to salvation and so his specific rules for the visitation of the local *membra* follow from the same premise. He first addresses those who hold benefices, requiring them to observe the canons with regard to habit, tonsure, chastity, conversation, and divine offices and services. He

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[104] *Reformatio Generalis* 10, 6–11 (*fi* XV: 33): "Et quia tales non minus obligantur ad observantiam regularum et canonum, ideo canon, qui mandat illa etiam promitti, omnino recipi mandetur, et transgresssores, cum non sint ex mala consuetudine ab observantia canonum absoluti, non minus quam in priori casu ad formam in Canone et Pastorali scriptam reducantur aut eiciantur."

[105] *Reformatio Generalis* 11, 4–7 (*fi* XV: 33): "Diffinitur enim vita cuiuslibet in nominis eius diffinitione. Qui enim aliter se habet quam nomen eius designat, utique falso sic nominatur et indignus est nomine, cuius vita eius significato contradicit."

[106] *Reformatio Generalis* 11, 22–28 (*fi* XV: 34): "Quomodo enim veraciter dici potest quis christianus, cuius vita Christo adversatur? Aut quomodo religiosus, qui apostata; quomodo monachus, qui in urbibus discurrit; quomodo canonicus, qui irregularis; quomodo sacerdos, qui profanus; quomodo curatus, qui curam fugit; quomodo rector, qui absens; quomodo episcopus, qui commisso gregi non superintendit; quomodo dux, qui seductor; quomodo rex, qui tyrannus?"

calls them to return to their original form (*primaevam eorum institutionem*) and to consider their various incorporations, dispensations, and the like in light of the larger goal of edifying the church—"for they are not credited to us for the destruction and diminution of the church of Christ, but for the edification and augmentation of it and its divine worship."[107] Then, he deals with absenteeism and pluralism, arguing that the *cultus* is in fact diminished by a vacancy. He suggests that absentees either return to their place or find a suffragan to carry out the duties, or the visitors will do it for them.[108] Similarly, pluralists cannot be in two places at once and so those churches which lack a cleric because of his pluralism should remove their prebend from the absentee and use it for their own pastoral care, not the personal income of its holder.[109] The problem for Cusanus is that the misuse of these offices threatens pastoral care for the church and stewardship of its worship, and since the church is a means of salvation for the faithful, it in turn threatens their salvation.

The concern for reformed practices in the church shares the same rationale. He threatens to revoke the privileges of those who resist visitation, on the premise that they were given them because of their exemplary personal qualities, but intransigence to reform effectively negates the basis for their conferral.[110] For all cathedrals or collegiate churches that do not submit to visitation he authorizes both the revocation of privileges and the threat of interdict.[111] He prohibits those under censure from obtaining their benefices and celebrating mass, as well as the

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[107] *Reformatio Generalis* 12, 13–15 (*h* XV: 35): "Non est enim nobis ecclesia Christi credita in destructionem et diminutionem, sed in aedificationem et augmentum eius et divini cultus."

[108] *Reformatio Generalis* 13 (*h* XV: 36).

[109] *Reformatio Generalis* 14–15 (*h* XV: 37).

[110] *Reformatio Generalis* 16, 3–6 (*h* XV: 38): "...quoniam illa non sunt eis concessa nisi ut humilibus et oboedientibus et tamquam dilectis deo et Apostolicae Sedi propter regulae observantiam et ut illam cum maiori pace observare possint..."

[111] *Reformatio Generalis* 17 (*h* XV: 39).

churches from accepting them.[112] He authorizes the reform of hospitals, the construction of churches, and the enclosure (*clausura*) of convents, so the female religious might be dedicated spouses of Christ—the one to whom they made solemn vows.[113] He stipulates the inspection and examination of all relics, which had become an increasingly problematic industry in the preceding century.[114] He would have the visitors first ascertain whether the relics are true or false, yet still discourage the faithful from seeking them since popularity was a reason for their frequent falsification (*cur saepe falsificantur talia ab avaris*). He then adds what has become a well-known qualification: "It suffices for Christian people to have Christ truly in his church in the divine sacrament of the Eucharist, in which it has everything that could be desired for salvation. True relics may be venerated, but much more so Christ, the head of all the saints."[115] Finally, he encouraged removing any number of proscribed activities and individuals from the church in order to make it "a pure spouse pleasing to God, as was the church of the ancients (*ecclesia primitivorum*), that it might merit being transferred from the militant to the triumphant and there acquire perpetual blessedness."[116] The goal of the mystical body is salvation through entrance into the church triumphant, and this salvation comes about as a result of the illuminative role the clergy plays in the Dionysian hierarchies. Where the knowledge of Christ is mediated to the church faithfully and *christiformiter*, the salvation of the church is made possible. In all of

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[112] *Reformatio Generalis* 18 (*h* XV: 39). This calls to mind Kaspar von Aigner's celebration of the Eucharist after his excommunication, Pavlac, "Curse of Cusanus," 208.

[113] *Reformatio Generalis* 19 (*h* XV: 40). On Cusanus's own venture to establish a hospital in his hometown of Bernkastel-Cues, see Watanabe, "St. Nicholas Hospital," 217–36. The enforcement of enclosure was also a preoccupation of Cusanus's from the 1451 Salzburg reform decree going forward.

[114] Cusanus had previously forbidden bleeding hosts in his Brixen diocese.

[115] *Reformatio Generalis* 20, 17–20 (*h* XV: 41): "Sufficiat populo christiano habere Christum veraciter in sua ecclesia in divinae eucharistiae sacramento, in quo habet omne quod desiderari potest ad salutem. Reliquias vero veneretur, sed longe plus Christum, caput omnium sanctorum."

[116] *Reformatio Generalis* 21, 5–8 (*h* XV: 42): "...et curent facere ecclesiam sponsam mundam deo placentem, uti fuit ecclesia primitivorum, quae mereatur de militanti in triumphantem transferri et ibi perpetua felicitate potiri."

these disciplinary measures and practical reforms, he has in mind the reform of member clergy so they might illuminate the faithful with Christ through pastoral care, preaching, catechesis, liturgy and sacrament.

Reform of Pope and Curia (*RG* 23–28)

A third section is worth considering for its relation to Cusanus's concepts of church and reform in the preceding sermons. He concludes the specific instructions for visitors and returns again in subsequent sections to the reform of the papacy and the cardinalate. First, he argues that the pope has an obligation to reform himself so he might fulfill his office and edify the church. The Roman bishop was granted a curacy (*vicariatum*) of Christ over the *ecclesia militans*, and that includes the preservation of the "orthodox faith." He has a degree of latitude in establishing sacred canons for the purpose of edifiying the church, though this is done in accordance with the pastoral responsibilities implied in his office.[117] The name for the papacy (*papa*) indicates that the pope is a "father" and patriarch in relation to the fathers of the church, an archbishop in relation to his "chief place" (*principatum*) amongst the other bishops, a bishop in relation to his oversight of the "divine flock," and a priest "because those things which are of the priestly office, we know apply to us even more (*maxime ad nos spectare scimus*)." Above all, the pope has the office of servant as the "highest and most conformable to Christ."[118] Consequently, he should conform himself to the exemplar established for him in each, that he might fulfill his pastoral obligations

[117] This is similar to the conciliarist application of *epiekeia*, which Cusanus came to equate with the papal responsibility for the *aedificatio ecclesiae*. On this, see Sigmund, *Nicholas of Cusa and Medieval Political Thought*, 241.

[118] *Reformatio Generalis* 23, 19–32 (*h* XV: 43): "Scimus enim nos papam nominari, quia esse debemus pater patrum, et patriarcham, quia ad quae omnes patres sunt astricti, nos principalius obligamur, etiam archiepiscopum, quia inter diligenter superintendentes episcopos nos principatum tenere oportet; episcopum etiam nos nominamus, quia attentius superintendere divino gregi tenemur; sacerdotem nos fatemur, quia ea, quae sacerdotalis officii sunt, maxime ad nos spectare scimus. Ob haec omnia utique altissima et Christo magis conformia sanctitatis nobis nomen christiani servi dei attribuunt, quorum servorum dei nos servum confitemur dicente domino nostro secundum Marcum: 'Quicumque voluerit in vobis primus esse, erit omnium servus'."

in service of the church's edification. It is for this reason that visitation has become so exigent. If the pope desires to fulfill his office, then he will make every effort to reflect in his life the names attached to him. This should lead him to receive visitors without reservation. The pope "should ask chosen visitors" to "diligently visit and judge" him that he might not be deceived in judging himself.[119] The visitors, for their part, should not fear visiting the pope, but instead view him as a sinful man in need of reform in order to accomplish the tasks given him. They should see not only the "vicar of Christ," but a "minister of Christians," not only a "father of fathers," but a "servant of servants," not only one possessing the "highest and holiest dignity," but also a "sinfulness and infirmity in common with all men," not one whose place in the church consists in "domination," but in the "ministry of edification."[120] The pope willingly accepts the visitors and their findings because of the desire to reform himself.

The same basic transparency and desire for reform should hold for the cardinals as well. He formulates three standards for their reform, all anticipated by his earlier personal reform of the clergy: their personal zeal for the church, their independent counsel, and their moral example. The first, personal zeal, is necessary because of the important role the cardinalate plays in church governance. The cardinals represent the entire church, choose the pope in conclave, comprise a "compendious daily council as legates of the nations," and create together with the pope a

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[119] *Reformatio Generalis* 24, 3–8 (*fi* XV: 44): "Et ne nos in propria causa nostro iudicio fallamur, electos vice dei visitatores rogamus, ut nos diligenter visitent et iudicent certificantes eos, quia parati sumus formam, quae nobis eorum iudicio convenit quoad personam, familiam, curiam et omnia, quae ad papalem dignitatem et officium spectant, gratissimo animo acceptare."

[120] *Reformatio Generalis* 24, 8–17 (*fi* XV: 44): "Nec terreantur papam visitare, quando eundem, quem vident vicarium Christi, vident et christianorum ministrum, et quem vident patrem patrum, vident et servum servorum, et quem vident singulariter dignitate altissimum et sanctissimum, vident etiam communiter cum aliis hominibus peccabilem et infirmum et se pro tali cognoscentem et iuxta evangelicam octrinam profitentem prioritatem et maioritatem non in dominatione, sed in ministerio aedificandae ecclesiae consistere. Quidquid igitur in nobis invenerint, quod non aedificat, sed scandalizat potius ecclesiam, omnino nobis manifestent, ut emendemus."

mystical body in their own right, that of a papal head and curial members working together.[121] For this reason, only "strong cardinals" should be named. They should be "pleasing to God" and "serious men free from levity." As part of that curial body with the pope, they share in his responsibility for the *aedificatio ecclesiae*. They must "carry out their offices with zeal" as Christ did in ejecting moneychangers from the temple, nor should they trade on their offices like "solicitors."[122] The second related requirement is their "free and faithful counsel." The cardinals should not be compelled by "favors, hatred, partialities, and the like," nor should they be protectors of "nations, princes, or communes." The cardinal is a mercenary (*conductus*) if he seeks to make money from his connections by influencing his brothers in the consistory.[123] He must instead spurn gifts, limit himself to "three or four thousand florins" a year, and "shun all blandishments" in order to offer this "faithful and free counsel."[124]

The third principle Cusanus sets out for the reform of the cardinalate is an exemplary life, and it is even more pertinent to the view he has of the relationship between personal reform and pastoral reform. While the pope edifies the church more directly in words through his magisterial office, the cardinals do so in deeds through their example. They are then held to a higher moral standard than other prelates, "for life should correspond to grade."[125] In accordance with this, he

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[121] *Reformatio Generalis* 25 (*h* XV: 45).

[122] *Reformatio Generalis* 26, 20–22 (*h* XV: 47): "Non erunt nec sollicitatores, quod indigni promoveantur, etiam consanguinei et servitores, sed illi, qui iuxta canonicas sanctiones verbo et exemplo domum dei aedificare possunt."

[123] On the complex obstacles to fiscal reform of the Roman curia, see Barbara McClung Hallman, *Italian Cardinals, Reform, and the Church as Property* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

[124] *Reformatio Generalis* 27, 8–12 (*h* XV: 47): "Oportet igitur perfectum cardinalem sibi ipsi firmam legem imponere munera spernendi, nihil tunc plus exspectare, quando tria vel quattuor milia florenos habuerit annue, et omnia huius mundi blandimenta vitare, quae eum a fideli et libero consilio retrahere possent." It is worth nothing that Pius II's electoral capitulations included ensuring an income of 4000 florins per year for all cardinals which he was to subsidize from the papal treasury, Thompson, *Popes and Princes*, 67.

[125] *Reformatio Generalis* 28, 1–8 (*h* XV: 48): "Tertium utique requiritur ad aedificationem ecclesiae. Nam cum cardinales praeduces religionum esse debeant, uti in Canone nominantur, et magis exemplo quam verbo aedificare possint universalem ecclesiam, utique ad vitam exemplarem propter loci prioritatem plus aliis obligantur."

sets forth a number of disciplinary strictures: smaller households with fewer than forty members and less than twenty animals, prohibition of pluralism and absenteeism, red hats alone for the cardinals, and a simple table and home decorum.[126] Cusanus sets as goal for the reform of the cardinalate that they might become worthy of imitation (*merito imitandis*). This symbolizes not only the requirement of an exemplary life for the cardinals, but indeed the proper ordering of personal reform to pastoral reform amongst the higher clergy: as those charged with the edification of the church, pope and curia have a responsibility to serve as moral exemplars for the faithful.

The remainder of *Reformatio generalis* sketches other important parameters for the reform of the churches, religious houses, and hospitals in Rome, the reduction of curial bloating, and the restructuring and oversight of the important apostolic penitentiary.[127] All of these specific measures, however, remain contingent upon the principles of church reform he had first established in his preface and subsequently underscored in his regulations for visitation, rationale for reform of the pope, and specific requirements for the cardinals. The exemplar for every Christian is Christ. All conform to him through virtue and return to their original state in baptism. The reform of the clergy is a subset of the broader personal reform of the entire church. As the eyes of the mystical body—the church personified—pope and curia are charged with visiting, reforming, and edifying the rest of the body, but they first require reform in order to accomplish this. The standard for reform, like the individual members, is conformity to Christ, so

[126] On the regulation of curial households, see Norman P. Zacour, "Papal Regulation of Cardinal's Households in the Fourteenth Century," *Speculum* 50 (1975): 434–55. Regarding the color of hats, Pius II had apparently ordered hats for the newly elevated cardinals in 1460. Given Cusanus's concern with clerical modesty since his Brixen days, that pending development may be in view here. On this and curial dress more generally, see Carol M. Richardson, *Reclaiming Rome: Cardinals in the Fifteenth Century* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2009), 122–40.

[127] On the apostolic penitentiary under Pius II, see now Hanska and Salonen, *Entering a Clerical Career*, 21–164.

they might in turn be of service to the rest of the church by fulfilling their pastoral tasks and providing it with an example of holy living.

Pastoral Reform and the Roman Clergy

Cusanus's time in Rome provides him the stage to set forth the ideas about reform he had developed throughout his Brixen episcopacy, resulting in a causal relationship between the personal reform of the clergy in imitiation of Christ and their pastoral reform in service to the church. Over the course of 1459, that emerges in the common lines of thought developed in the Roman sermons and the reform proposal. First, in both instances the driving metaphor for the reform of the clergy is not structural, fiscal, or even pastoral, but personal. He presents the clergy with *christiformitas* as an image of personal reform. Christ is the exemplar of all, including the clergy, and all imitate him by replacing vice with his virtue, thereby returning to their original form in baptism. Here he employs his inversion of the medieval counsels of perfection. Instead of using the counsels to emphasize the greater degree of obedience required by the higher estates in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, he orients it in the opposite direction: the clergy must desire personal reform as Christians first, and only then concern themselves with the reform of their own estate, whether that of canon, cardinal, or pope. This inverted *evangelica regula* enables him to present all clergy as sinful humans in need of personal reform. The goal of each estate is conformity to Christ to the end of salvation, even if that implies different parameters and responsibilities.

The personal reform of the Roman clergy should lead to a greater expiation of their pastoral responsibilities. This comes out clearly in the Roman synodal sermon and in the *Reformatio generalis*. If pope, cardinals, and basilica clergy accept visitation and reform themselves accordingly, then it will have a direct correlation with the fulfillment of their pastoral tasks. They reform themselves first personally as Christians in imitation of their divine exemplar,

Christ, and in doing so also return to the "first form" they put on when they received their offices. The *christiform* canon becomes a better canon and submits himself to the rule in liturgical service. The *christiform* cardinal becomes a better cardinal and provides a living example of virtue and zeal for the faithful. The *christiform* pope becomes a better pope and emends his customs for edification of the church. A *christiform* curia becomes a better curia and can provide the church the lucid eyes needed to visit and reform it. This follows from their function within the Dionysian hierarchies as the means through which illumination comes to the lower ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy so they might imitiate Christ and attain perfection. The Roman clergy, as with all clergy, mediate Christ downward to the faithful, not in an authoritarian or hierocratic manner, but so that the faithful might ascend upward toward salvation. Consquently, the willingness and effectiveness of the higher clergy in reforming themselves will lead to the reform of the church in all its *membra*— religious, clergy, and laity.

In this way, the reform enterprise Cusanus constructs in the 1459 Roman sermons and draft bull is but an extension of the concepts he had articulated in his Brixen reform sermons. In the crucible of Brixen, he was forced to adapt his concepts of church and reform to the respective monastic and clerical challenges facing him, anticipating many that he would later find in Rome. Cusanus used *christiformitas* as an image for the personal reform of the clergy in Brixen, where he presented conformity to Christ through the imitation of his virtue as the means of their personal reform. He urged the religious of his diocese to obey their rule not first in order to gain salvation, but as a consequence of their being *christiform*. These ideas come to expression concretely in both the Roman sermons and the reform proposal. He implores canons of the chief Roman basilicas to reform themselves in conformity to Christ, not simply to change their practices, and then secondarily compels them to carry out their clerical responsibilities as an expression of *christiformitas*. In the same way, he calls on pope and cardinal to reform

themselves personally first by returning to their original form as baptized Christians, then after that attending to the vocational obligations named by their offices.

The other key element Cusanus draws from his Brixen reform sermons is the implication of pastoral reform for the reform of the church. In Brixen, he emphasized to the clergy that their pastoral responsibilities had a causal relationship with the salvation of the faithful. As a result of their function within the Dionysian ecclesiastical hierarchy, the members of the church were led toward *christiformitas*, mystical union with Christ, and ultimately perpetual blessedness. He continues these same basic themes in Rome, above all in the reform proposal, though here he reintegrates an idea seldom explicit in his reform sermons: the image of the church as mystical body. It is the personification of the church as a sick body in need of health through the setting aright of its eyes that enables Cusanus to make a final connection between the reform of the higher clergy and the reform of the church in all its members. Since the clergy are responsible for mediating salvation to the faithful through their pastoral tasks, the health of the church as a personified body depends upon the members ordained to preserve that health meeting their obligations. If a general reform of the church should come to pass, it must begin with a Roman pope and cardinalate submitting themselves to visitation and reform. Only then can a reformed curia carry out the task of ecclesiastical goverance given it.

Without question, these ideas represent the theoretical ideal of a capacious intellectual bringing his theological and philosophical insights to bear upon a bureaucratic institution often resistant to such principled reform. The failure of Cusanus's efforts in Rome, as in Brixen, had much to do with the vast difference between this theoretical vision, rooted in his own idiosyncratic metaphysical assumptions, and the pragmatics of an ecclesiopolitical realm that did not share his deeply conceptual views of church and reform. Nonetheless, the Roman sermons and reform proposal derive directly from those principles he had articulated in his equally

unsuccessful attempts to reform his Brixen diocese. The church as a mystical body and salvific hierarchy injects the *Reformatio generalis* with the pivotal concept needed to link pastoral reform with the reform of the entire church, including the personal reform of all the faithful toward the end of their salvation. *Christiformitas* as an image of personal reform likewise supplies a rationale for the personal reform of the clergy as Christians seeking their own salvation and in the process reforming themselves pastorally. Indeed, their personal conformity to Christ implied the fulfillment of their vocational obligations in imitation of him. The two principles—the church as mystical body and *christiformitas* as image of personal reform—remain interrelated, as elsewhere. Without the mystical body, *christiformitas* is loosed from its ecclesiastical responsibility for the *bene esse* of the church; without *christiformitas*, the mystical body is subject to hierarchical or corporatist readings with corresponding authoritarian or egalitarian excesses. Taken together in the context of Dionysian hierarchy and participation, however, they provide complementary images for the reform of the church as a means of salvation. These reciprocal images embody a robustly mystical "Christiform ecclesiology of reform."[128]

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[128] Izbicki, "*Christiformitas*," 5.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

This study has sought to augment the traditional picture of Nicholas of Cusa's later career as that of a stern monarchical papalist enforcing his reforms in an authoritarian manner. While there is no doubt some truth to this picture, it fails to account for the broader principles of church and reform Cusanus brought to bear on his ecclesiastical endeavors, as well as his own personal search for a different plane on which to carry out those reforms in response to a series of conflicts and failures. The Brixen episcopate was enmeshed in a multilayered power struggle customary for late medieval Europe. Lodged between the competing claims of pope, emperor, duke, local nobility, cathedral chapter, and monastic house, Cusanus exercised his episcopal jurisdiction through synodal legislation with varying degrees of success. Complementing these legislative efforts at reform were the sermons he preached, both in his Brixen cathedral pulpit and in monastic visitations and clerical synods delivered *ad status*. Over the course of the Brixen tenure, these sermons reveal underlying shifts in Cusanus's concepts of church and reform. The related conflicts with monastic orders and with secular authority in the Tyrol, in conjunction with a controversy over mystical theology smoldering for roughly a decade prior to arriving in his see, may have given Cusanus the pause necessary to reconsider the theological basis for his approach to church reform. It only stands to reason that such a constructive intellectual thinker would respond to a practical ecclesiastical crisis not strictly through redoubling his reform efforts, but rather by reconsidering the theological basis and goals of such reform. Making fresh recourse to the *corpus Dionysiacum* in the pivotal years of 1454 and 1455, he soon came to incorporate the

Dionysian hierarchies anew into his ecclesiology and reform ideas. The results emerge in the sermons from late 1455 onward.

The reconceptualized ideas of church and reform he employs become visible in the Cusan motifs of *corpus mysticum* and *christiformitas*. These two ideas, each having roots in Cusanus's earlier thought, nonetheless take on a different shape in the sermons of his last two years in Brixen as he works them into his active preaching of reform. The church as a mystical body, itself deeply rooted in medieval ecclesiology and late medieval conciliarism, came to reflect neither hierocratic nor egalitarian extremes, but rather an organic Dionysian hierarchy whereby the clergy mediate salvation to the faithful. Through their mediation, the lower ranks of the hierarchy—including the clergy—received the illumination necessary to attain mystical union with the head of the body, Christ. *Christiformitas*, on the other hand, reflected the Dionysian emphasis on imitation of the divine as the means toward the perfection of the individual and attainment of mystical union. The *corpus mysticum* provided the means to attain *christiformitas*. Conversely, *christiformitas* itself described the faithful constituency within the *corpus permixtum*. Cusanus finds the conceptual apparatus he needs to relate these two terms and present the reform of the church in a salvific, mystical trajectory in the Dionysian hierarchies with their attendant movements of purgation-illumination-perfection, hierarchical mediation of illumination, and imitation of the divine through participation. Mystical theology provides him the conceptual resources necessary to reorient ecclesiology and reform in a speculative direction.

The opportunity to employ these concepts presented itself in the monastic and clerical reform sermons of 1455 through 1457. In visitation of the religious, especially those in Neustift and Säben, he uses essentially inverted counsels of perfection to urge observant reform. Rather than observing their monastic rule as a work of supererogation in accordance with a greater standard of obedience, now the goal for all—religious included—is *christiformitas*. The specific

vocational means for attaining that goal among the religious is conformity to their rule. Cusanus urges the religious to become like Christ first and this in turn entails obedience to the rule. In the clerical synods of the same period, he seeks to impress upon the regular and secular clergy of the diocese their specific vocational obligations. He again relates that goal to *christiformitas*. By fulfilling their clerical responsibilities, the clergy provide the faithful the illumination necessary to obtain *christiformitas* through the imitation of Christ. This involves a shift from the routine late medieval emphasis on reforming the clerical *potestas iurisdictionis* to reforming the *potestas ordinis*. These Dionysian-influenced concepts come together when Cusanus arrives in Rome and takes up the task of reforming the Roman city churches and curia. First in the Roman synodal and visitation sermons, then in his 1459 reform proposal, Cusanus describes the personal renewal of all clergy through attaining *christiformitas* and presents the entire church as a personified human body in need of health. Pope and curia, like the Roman basilica clergy, and the clergy and religious of Brixen before them, all have the same goal of conformity to Christ by imitation of his virtue. Where the higher clergy thus conform themselves to Christ, they facilitate the improved health of all those underneath them within the hierarchy and provide the rest of the church with the means it needs to attain salvation through mystical union with Christ. The specific *ad status* reform sermons in Brixen and in Rome, then, evidence a significant transition toward the comprehensive reform proposal Cusanus drafts in 1459.

Morimichi Watanabe once opined regarding the Brixen episopacy that "every scholar who studies Cusanus and his ideas will have to decide, sooner or later, what to say about the most difficult and controversial period of Cusanus's life."[1] The results of this study qualify somewhat claims of the cardinal bishop's "obtuseness in political practice" (Jaspers), that he was no longer

[1] Watanabe, *Concord and Reform*, 50.

the "dynamic and passionately devoted apostle of loving reform" in Brixen, but "the rule-maker, the threatener, the devious schemer with foreign powers, the wielder of ecclesiastical censures" (Tillinghast), or that there was a contradiction between his "spiritual vision of reform" and the "narrowly legalistic nature of so much of his practical reforming activities" (Oakley).[2] That is not to say Cusanus stayed above the fray. He in fact did wield censures and dictate synodal legislation and avail himself of the jurisdiction appropriate to his office as bishop, even when contested. Given the context of the late medieval church, it seems he had few other options. No matter how expansive his mind or keen his speculative insights, the prospect of reforming the diocese through agreement on theological principles was unlikely. Yet this exigently despotic bent must be balanced by the pastoral efforts Cusanus did carry out, chiefly in his sermons. The deeply theological, mystical character of his preaching, drawing on sources that ranged from Augustine and Aquinas to Meister Eckhardt and Pseudo-Dionysius, reveal his concern for the spiritual renewal of the faithful. Where the sermons at times could take on an autocratic tone, they far more often drew on biblical exposition and theological concepts to communicate in as concrete of terms as possible—at least for a speculative thinker like Cusanus—his understanding of salvation. To criticize Cusanus for failing to bring his metaphysical ideas to bear upon his reform efforts is not only unfair, but wrongheaded: he did and he did so through his sermons.

Cusanus's failures, then, had less to do with an inability to reconcile his theological views and his reform practices than they did with his difficulty grasping the socially-knitted religious fabric of popular religion in the late medieval church. Various scholars have highlighted the depth of popular religious commitment in European communities of the later Middle Ages and

[2] Jaspers, *Great Philosophers*, 1:238, 242; Tillinghast, "Nicholas of Cusa vs. Sigmund," 390; and Oakley, *Western Church*, 241.

the ways in which those commitments held the communities together.[3] To reform the church in a diocese such as Brixen would have upset the stability of that community no matter the bishop. Even though Cusanus was well within his rights as a bishop to reform the diocese, and even though he sought reform spiritually from the pulpit as much as he did jurisdictionally through writ, the efforts to enforce episcopal authority in a diocese well on its way to secularization would understandably encounter opposition. The long established relationship between the Tyrolese dukes and the bishops of Brixen, the support of the duke and of the local nobility for the religious houses, the popularity of local religious festivals, pilgrimages, and what to Cusanus seemed like spurious practices were of old provenance and not likely to be abolished without tension. For a cardinal, even one who spoke in the German tongue—though it was an unfamiliar dialect at that!—to carry out such thoroughgoing reforms successfully was not promising. But to attribute that to Cusanus's temperament or intransigence or similar character faults begs comparison to other late medieval reforming bishops, in particular cardinals who might have acquired a see by prerogative and taken up residence in the diocese against much opposition, yet still attempted to bring about comprehensive reform. The list of analogues would no doubt be short. Rather than addressing the failures of Cusanus's episcopacy, moreover, it might be better to begin with the uniqueness of what he tried to accomplish in the first place. That in fact may hold the key to understanding not only the nature of his failures, but the impetus for his reconsideration of ecclesiology and the reform enterprise altogether.

A study as restricted as this one, concerning itself with a very limited set of sources from one particular thinker over a narrow window of time and with a rather specific set of circumstances surrounding it gives precious little basis for addressing the general state of

[3] The seminal article on this topic is John Bossy, "The Mass as Social Institution, 1200–1700," *Past and Present* 100 (1983): 29–61, but see also the literature cited in chapter two, n. 8.

scholarship. Nonetheless, given the pivotal role Cusanus played in the fifteenth-century church and how many neuralgic points of late medieval church history his example touches, it seems necessary to underscore his relationship to two prevalent discussions in the literature: late medieval church reform and late medieval ecclesiology. In the case of late medieval reform, from his time at the Council of Basel to his encounters with the observant movement during the German legation and finally to his efforts at reforming the Roman curia, Cusanus's career spanned many of the pivotal reform movements of the fifteenth century.[4] Yet he repeatedly found them wanting. The inability to bring about lasting reform, whether true *concordantia* through council or pope, *perfectam observanciam et reformacionem* of the monastery, or a *reformatio in capite et membris* of the clergy, left him searching for a broader plane on which to ground reform. The obstacles he faced—overlapping layers of often contradictory ecclesiopolitical authorities, increasing territorialization and secularization of the church, anticlericalism and opposition to episcopally sanctioned reforms, the bloated bureaucracy of a post-Avignonese pope and curia—were pervasive throughout the later Middle Ages. As a first-rate intellectual of his day, it stood to reason that Cusanus might tire of toying with these institutions and instead opt for ideas in order to recast his reform vision. The intricate relation he comes to weave between mysticism, ecclesiology, and personal reform in Brixen and the proposal for reform he offers in Rome speak to that same fact: for Cusanus, reform does not occur through strictly institutional measures, but through a spiritual renewal founded on theological principles (indeed, the precise opposite of the claim Jaspers has made, repeated citations of him notwithstanding). Cusanus was a decidedly theological thinker and came

[4] The case of Cusanus is more evidence that the purported "unresponsiveness of the late medieval church" remains a myth perpetuated largely by Reformation scholars themselves and projected back onto the later Middle Ages, Duggan, "Unresponsiveness," 3–26. On this approach of Reformation scholarship to the medieval church, see also Constantin Fasolt, "Hegel's Ghost: Europe, the Reformation, and the Middle Ages," *Viator* 39 (2008): 345–86.

increasingly to ground his reform in theological ideas. His later ecclesiology is formative for his later reform efforts and in no way a mechanical, authoritarian expression of "political partisanship."[5] Failure to understand the theological motives behind his reforms will result in a corresponding inability to appreciate why he took reform as seriously as he did and why he willingly suffer opposition to accomplish it.

On the other hand, Cusanus's later approach to ecclesiology does not fit within the customary presentation of late medieval ecclesiology. The tendency to pit the early conciliarist Cusanus against the later papalist Cusanus reflects the prototypical caricature. If he had in fact become a rank papalist by the time he arrived in Brixen, that image diminishes considerably. He is no strict monarchical papalist in any way, at least if the sermons or Roman reform proposal are any indication, but a restless intellectual and speculative theologian applying his insights to the ecclesiastical reality in which he found himself. What he above all desired was not an ecclesiology revolving around partisan ecclesiopolitical affiliation, but one that affirmed the centrality of the church in salvation. This is the primary reason he considered the disunity at Basel so disconcerting and freely exercised excommunication in Brixen and lamented tearfully to Pius II about his failures in reforming Rome. Where the church remained unreformed, the salvation of the faithful was potentially in peril. He saw a theological dimension to it that many of his fellow late medieval reformers shared in their search for the *vera ecclesia*.[6] Unlike Joachim, Marsiglio, Ockham, Wycliffe, or Hus, however, he thought it more likely to find the true church within the institutional structure, where the Dionysian-conceived clerical and

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[5] Stieber, "Hercules of the Eugenians," 249.

[6] For discussions of the *vera ecclesia*, see Scott H. Hendrix, "In Quest of the *vera ecclesia*: The Crises of Late Medieval Ecclesiology," *Viator* 7 (1976): 347–78; Gordon Leff, "The Apostolic Ideal in Late Medieval Ecclesiology," *Journal of Theological Studies* 18 (1967): 58–82; Gordon Leff, "The Making of the Myth of a True Church in the Later Middle Ages," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 1 (1971): 1–15; and Pascoe, "Ecclesia Primitiva," 379–409.

sacramental means of illumination were present—including papacy *and* council—rather than outside or apart from it.[7] Yet this constancy makes him no mere papalist ecclesiologically any more than his pursuit of unity within the *societas Christianae* through councils made him a publicist.[8] On the contrary, the whole was always greater than the parts, the body always prior to its members, precisely because it was Christ's body.[9] Therefore, papacy and curia, council and synod, bishop and priest, regular clergy and secular clergy, monastery and convent were all part of the same *ecclesia militans*, even if it was a *corpus permixtum*, and all were in need of reform if they hoped to reach the *ecclesia triumphans*.

Finally, it would be remiss of me in submitting a dissertation to a Lutheran faculty at a Lutheran institution not to make at least some passing reference to Cusanus's relationship with the Protestant Reformation. The ascription "forerunner of the Reformation" misses the mark with Cusanus because he shares very few of the same basic theological concerns dividing parties in the confessionalized sixteenth century.[10] That aside, the example of Cusanus proves that serious attempts at reform were made throughout the fifteenth century, some even coming from the most ardent supporters of the papacy and some even directed at the pope himself. To be a servant of the Roman see was not necessarily at odds with reforming the Roman see. Such a dichotomy

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[7] On Cusanus and the *vera ecclesia*, see Izbicki, "Church in the Light," 204–06, especially his claim that Cusanus's ecclesiology "fit uneasily" with the late medieval pursuit.

[8] In this sense, I agree with Fasolt and Nederman that what a fifteenth-century conciliarist and a fifteenth-century papalist had in common was greater than what differentiated them, let alone what conciliarists or papalists of later centuries might have in common with them. See Fasolt, *Council and Hierarchy*, 315–20; Fasolt, "William Durant the Younger," 385–402; and Nederman, "Constititutionalism—Medieval and Modern," 179–94.

[9] This is yet another reason why he seldom identifies the papacy as head of the church in his sermons and why he speaks of the papacy as "eyes" of the mystical body in his reform treatise—the head is reserved for Christ since the *corpus mysticum* is his body.

[10] For a discussion of the term and its literature, see Heiko A. Oberman, *Forerunners of the Reformation: The Shape of Late Medieval Thought Illustrated by Key Documents* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 1–49.

would have to await the Reformation itself.[11] Suffice it to say that the Cusanus of the Brixen and Rome periods would have felt himself constrained by the resulting alternatives.[12] Claims that Cusanus "without question would have preferred the reforms of the Catholic to those of the Protestant Reformation" (Hendrix) may presume too much for his commitment to the papacy over against conciliarism.[13] Given his longstanding familiarity with Greek Christianity, his relationship with the Greek cardinal Bessarion, his interest in Greek manuscripts and Greek thought—even his ready incorporation of Dionysian ideas more generally into his understanding of salvation and the church—it might be worth asking whether the Western nomenclature of Roman Catholic (or Protestant) could ever apply to Cusanus.[14] In fact, it might be worth asking to what degree it could apply to any fifteenth-century figure, let alone the enigmatic polymath, philosopher, theologian, canonist, cardinal, bishop, and reformer from Kues.

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[11] Accounts of confessionalization have contributed much to understanding the ways in which the Protestant traditions and Roman Catholicism came to parallel one another in their formation—and in turn contrast with both pre-Reformation history and the beginnings of the Reformation itself. On this literature, see John W. O'Malley, *Trent and All That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000). For representative treatments of the topic, see H. Outram Evennett, *The Spirit of the Counter Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968); Scott H. Hendrix, *Recultivating the Vineyard: The Reformation Agendas of Christianization* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004); Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia, *Social Discipline in the Reformation: Central Europe 1550–1750* (London: Routledge, 1989); Wolfgang Reinhard, "Pressures towards Confessionalization? Prolegomena to a Theory of the Confessional Age," in *The German Reformation: The Essential Readings*, ed. C. Scott Dixon (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 169–92; and Ernst Walter Zeeden, *Konfessionsbildung: Studien zur Reformation, Gegenreformation und katholischen Reform* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1985).

[12] In this sense, Cusanus reflected the diversity of intellectual, religious, and cultural options available in the fifteenth-century church. On this, see John van Engen, "Multiple Options: The World of the Fifteenth-Century Church," *Church History* 77 (2008): 257–84.

[13] Hendrix, "Nicholas of Cusa's Ecclesiology," 124.

[14] More study on Cusanus's understanding of the Greeks would help shape this picture more definitively. The most significant account theologically is Nancy Hudson's argument that his view of theosis bears greater similarity to Greek thought and must be seen in this light rather than that of Western thought, especially the condemned teachings of Meister Eckhart, Nancy Hudson, *Becoming God: The Doctrine of Theosis in Nicholas of Cusa* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007). Other pertinent literature includes Thomas Sören Hoffman, "Bessarion and Cusanus: Eine Konvergenz in Zeichen neoplatonischen Einheitsdenkens," *Cusanus Jahrbuch* 2 (2010): 70–94; Erich Meuthen, "Ein 'deutscher' Freundeskreis an der römischen Kurie in der Mitte des 15.Jahrhunderts," *Annuarium historiae conciliorum* 27/28 (1995/96): 487–542; Hans Gerhard Senger, "Griechisches und biblisch-patristisches Erbe im cusanischen Weisheitsbegriff," *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 20 (1990): 147–76; and Senger, "Die Präferenz für Ps.-Dionysius," 505–539.

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