Cover Image: Illustration from *The Great Book of Thomas Trevillian* (c. 1616).
THE STRIPPING OF THE MINISTRY:
A RECONSIDERATION AND RETRIEVAL OF ROBERT BROWNE’S THEOLOGY OF ORDAINED MINISTRY

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad Doctor aan
de Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam,
op gezag van de rector magnificus
prof.dr. V. Subramaniam,
in het openbaar te verdedigen
ten overstaan van de promotiecommissie
van de Faculteit der Godgeleerdheid
op woensdag 10 januari 2018 om 15.45 uur
in het auditorium van de universiteit,
De Boelelaan 1105

door

Jan Martijn Abrahamse

geboren te Rotterdam
promotoren: prof.dr. H. A. Bakker
prof.dr. E.A.J.G. Van der Borght
In gratitude for Grace

Zolang gij nog onzichtbaar zijt,
   een zon diep in de nacht,
roep ik uw nadering reeds uit
   omdat ik U verwacht.

Willem Barnard
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABQ    American Baptist Quarterly
AEH    Anglican and Episcopal History
AGJU   Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AmSTaR Amsterdam Studies in Theology and Religion
ASNU   Acadia Studies in Bible and Theology
AThANT Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
ATR    Anglican Theological Review
BECNT  Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BETL   Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BGHNT  Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament
BMGN   Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden
BHH    Baptist History and Heritage
BQ     The Baptist Quarterly
BRT    Baptist Review of Theology
BSCH   Brill’s Series in Church History
BSHST  Basler Studien zur historischen und systematischen Theologie
BSIH   Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History
BSLC   Brill’s Studies in Language, Cognition and Culture
CBHHS  Centre for Baptist History and Heritage Studies
CGR    Conrad Grebel Review
CH     Church History
CHST   Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society
CSDC   Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine
CTJ    Calvin Theological Journal
CWE    Collected Works of Erasmus, ed. C.R. Thompson et al. (89 vols.; Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1974-).
DAC    Documents of Anglophone Christianity
DNK    Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800
DRCH   Dutch Review of Church History
ENCT   Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts
EJT    European Journal of Theology
F&O    Faith and Order
GPCS   Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies
HTR    Harvard Theological Review
HW     History of Warfare
IAPCHE | International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education

ICC | International Critical Commentary Series

IIMO | Interuniversitair Instituut voor Missiologie en Oecumenica


IRM | *International Review of Mission*

JAAR | *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*

JBS | *Journal of British Studies*

JEBS | *Journal of European Baptist Studies*

JEH | *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*

JETS | *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*

JHI | *Journal of History of Ideas*

JPT | *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*

JRT | *Journal of Reformed Theology*


KEK | Meyers Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament

LNTS | *Library of New Testament Studies*

Miss Stud | *Mission Studies*

MJT | *Mid-America Journal of Theology*

ModTheo | *Modern Theology*

MQR | *Mennonite Quarterly Review*

MTP | *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*

MTSS | McMaster Theological Studies Series.

NABPR | *National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion*

NGTT | *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif*

NHOS | *A New History of the Sermon*

NICNT | New International Commentary on the New Testament

NovT | *Novum Testamentum*

NTKR | *Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Kerk en Recht*

NTT | *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift*

OHCC | The Oxford History of the Christian Church

OrT | *Oral Tradition*

PCNT | Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament

PHC | The Pelican History of the Church

PJBR | *Pacific Journal of Baptist Research*
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>P&amp;P</td>
<td><em>Past and Present: A Journal of Historical Studies</em></td>
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<td>PRJ</td>
<td><em>Puritan Reformed Journal</em></td>
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<td>PRSt</td>
<td><em>Perspectives in Religious Studies</em></td>
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<td>PTMS</td>
<td><em>Princeton Theological Monograph Series</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>QR</td>
<td><em>The Quarterly Review</em></td>
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<td>R&amp;E</td>
<td><em>Review and Expositor</em></td>
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<td>RHT</td>
<td><em>Reformed Historical Theology</em></td>
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<td>RHTS</td>
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<tr>
<td>RQ</td>
<td><em>Renaissance Quarterly</em></td>
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<td>RRR</td>
<td><em>Reformation &amp; Renaissance Review</em></td>
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<td>RSHT</td>
<td><em>Rutherford Studies in Historical Theology</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>SAMH</td>
<td><em>Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>SBHT</td>
<td><em>Studies in Baptist History and Thought</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>SCE&amp;S</td>
<td><em>Sixteenth Century Essays &amp; Studies</em></td>
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<td>SCJ</td>
<td><em>Sixteenth-Century Journal</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>SHCT</td>
<td><em>Studies in the History of Christian Traditions</em></td>
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<td>SMRT</td>
<td><em>Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions</em></td>
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<td>SRT</td>
<td><em>Studies in Reformed Theology</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>STL</td>
<td><em>Studia Theologica Lundensia</em></td>
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<td>SWJT</td>
<td><em>Southwestern Journal of Theology</em></td>
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<td>TBS</td>
<td><em>Transactions of the Bibliographical Society</em></td>
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<td>TENT</td>
<td><em>Texts and Editions for New Testament Study</em></td>
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<td><em>Travaux d’Humanisme et Renaissance</em></td>
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<td><em>Theologia Reformata</em></td>
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<td>TS</td>
<td><em>Theological Studies</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>VKNAW</td>
<td><em>Verhandelingen der Nederlandsche Akademie van Wetenschappen</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>WT</td>
<td><em>Wesleyan Theological Journal</em></td>
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<td>WTJ</td>
<td><em>Westminster Theological Journal</em></td>
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<td>WUNT 2</td>
<td><em>Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>ZDT</td>
<td><em>Zeitschrift für Dialektische Theologie</em></td>
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Preface ‘Biography as Theology’

In many ways this study feels like the much desired completion of a journey that began August 2005, when I switched studies from law to theology, and enrolled at the Evangelical Theological Faculty in Leuven, Belgium. The first years of studying theology were much like learning to speak a new language as well as learning to think anew. Besides numerous other fascinating encounters, it was particularly ecclesiology that caught my attention. Mainly formed or framed within the Free Church tradition, I was unfamiliar of the abundant wealth of the history of Christianity through the ages, such as that what can be found in the liturgy and piety of the Catholic and Reformed traditions. Well into my teens, the only ordained minister I had ever seen was in the Dutch Reformed church of my grandparents. Dignified in his black gown, high in the pulpit above the people, he proclaimed his prayers and sermon. In Leuven, I visited the mass in the St. Peter’s Church and was introduced to anti-phone prayer by both clergy and community, and the celebration of the Eucharist which could only be administered by a priest. Despite their proven durability, it became also clear that the various Christian ecclesial traditions were joined in their decline over the course of the twentieth century. The old structures whom I just got to know were no longer self-evident. In response, the early twenty-first century witnessed the emergence of new and various ecclesial initiatives across the Western world. Many books were published that described the innovative and missionary zeal that characterized a rising breed of ministers who were called ‘church planters.’ Especially the ‘early’ publications of the Dutch missiologist Stefan Paas have had significant influence upon my own developing ecclesiology. Much like this present study’s main protagonist, Robert Browne, did in the sixteenth century at Cambridge University, we too discussed these developments ‘amongst ourselves’ as students and wondered what such changes meant for us who were just beginning to consider going into church ministry. During my graduate studies at the VU University in Amsterdam, it was through the encounter with the letters of Ignatius of Antioch (c. 110) that I started to consciously think about the role of the ordained minister, about catholicity, apostolic continuity, and the centrality of the celebration of the Lord’s Supper or ‘eucharist’. Being raised within a Free Church context—averse to anything that can be associated with institutional or hierarchical configurations—a strange new world opened up for my eyes in which so much of the ongoing past was considered constitutive for the church’s

1 This title refers to James W. McClendon, Biography as Theology: How Life Stories Can Remake Today’s Theology (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974). In this book the Baptist theologian James McClendon sets out a theological method in which doctrinal theology is connected with the concrete lives of Christians, especially by examining the exemplary lives of saints. Hence, biography as theology. I take his proposal as an incentive to consciously connect my own theological convictions with my life story.

continual ecclesial existence. It was a notion which stood in sharp contrast with my Evangelical consciousness, which often celebrates a self-contained ‘here and now’, being happily emancipated from the claims from the past. In this study I am consciously looking for a constructive coherence between the particular tradition that I grew up with and the broader Christian tradition.

This current particular project took off in 2010, only a few months after Dr. Henk Bakker in his opening lecture of the new academic year urged a rethinking of the ministerial office in Baptist churches. The present study is in many ways a response to that call. It is therefore no coincidence that he became my supervisor. Later Dr. Eddy Van der Borght, with his expertise on Reformation ecclesiology, joined the team. Both proved to be a continuous support and encouragement to see this project through. My stay at Duke University’s Divinity School in 2012 widened and deepened my view of what the church is and should be. At Duke, Dr. Curtis Freeman took me by the hand and showed the diversity of American ‘baptist’ traditions, and specifically what it means to be an ‘Other’ Baptist. Spending a period in the American ‘South’ is really an experience unlike any other. As Stanley Hauerwas once said: “Baptists were the first Free Church movement to create a civilization. It is called the South.” Living within a dominant Christianized culture enabled me to take a fresh look at secular Western Europe and the attitude this requires of Christians. It was not to be about fighting for the preservation of what had been, but to faithfully seek new directions within a post-Christendom context. My stay at Duke University would not have been possible without the financial contributions of the Scholten-Cordes Fonds, the Stichting Honderd Gulden Reis, the Haak-Bastiaanse Kuneman Stichting, and the Feisser Fonds.

The most thoroughgoing ‘change’ came in November 2012 with my own ordination in the Alliance Church of Aalsmeer (Aalsmeerse CAMA Gemeente), which is part of the Confederation of Baptist and Alliance Churches in the Netherlands. These past years were the most intense schooling in the school of Christ. For now it was not only intellectual but most existential, as I experienced firsthand—or, as we say in Dutch: ‘to my body’ (‘aan den lijve’) —what it means to be an ordained minister. Being an ordained minister most incisively taught me to recognize my own limitations and weaknesses through my shortcomings and failures for which no theological class or book could prepare. I learned countless things from the elders, especially Rob Kool, who supported and coached me many times. It is therefore safe to say that this study is not in any way fueled by success or a sense of achievement. In many ways it is rather motivated by a lack of proper language to express and explain my own role. This study is my humble attempt

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3 See Henk A. Bakker, “Geroepen, niet gekozen” (Openingsrede, Doorn, 3 september 2010). An early attempt to address the issue of ordained ministry has been a collection of essays published as Van onderen! Op zoek naar een ambtstheologie voor een priesterschap van gelovigen, eds. Jan Martijn Abrahamse and Wout Huizing (Baptistica Reeks, vol. 8; Amsterdam: Unie van baptistengemeenten in Nederland, 2014).

to search for words, to speak theologically, firmly embedded within the Free Church tradition seeking continuity with 'Church Catholic'. Since I have been part of different ecclesial communities, both Reformed, Evangelical and Baptist, this study is not ‘one model to rule them all’, but more or less a search for common ground by retrieving common roots within the sixteenth-century reformations. Its famous adage, *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*, echoes throughout the chapters.

Besides my supervisors, many people have contributed to its completion by their remarks, suggestions and criticisms. First of all, I like to thank the Baptist Union in the Netherlands who have supported me generously with finances, a place to study, and a ecclesial family. Moreover, the members of the affiliated Baptist Seminary’s research-fellowship (‘Kenniskring’) read the first drafts of my chapters and helped me to find focus. Since August 2015 my principal place of residence has become Ede Christian University of Applied Sciences (CHE). There, I experience every time how the post-Christian condition enables the various Christian traditions rooted in the sixteenth-century reformation to be mutually supportive and constructive. At this point, I would particularly like to thank the Stichting Steunfonds CHE for their financial support that made this publication possible. I would also like to mention a few specific people who have particularly helped me with their criticism toward the end of my project. My deepest gratitude therefore goes to Ariaan Baan, Jack Barentsen, Robert Doornenbal, Daniel Drost, Jan van Helden, John Coffey, Curtis Freeman, Teun van der Leer, and Pieter van Wingerden who have all commented on parts of this study. Furthermore, I am grateful to Okke Postma who made my English suitable for printing, and Marijn Vlasblom who helped me prepare the final draft for printing.

During the years I worked at the Baptist Seminary, especially Teun van der Leer had a most profound influence upon me. Not only with regard to Baptist history and tradition, but maybe even more on a personal level. His encouragement and his life’s lessons not only sustained my research, but more importantly, have shaped me as a follower of Jesus. It was Teun who once sent me a postcard, which I received the day before I had to preach in his home church in Arnhem, with the hymn of Willem Barnard on the cover. It captures well what I came to see as the center of ordained ministry: reminding people of God’s rule in Christ in the midst of the apparent opposite. Another Baptist brother deserving my gratitude is my fellow PhD-candidate and good friend, Daniel Drost. I much enjoyed our conversations about theology, our pastoral practices, books, music, and life, especially during our visits to Bucharest and London. They taught me the importance of collegial encouragement and reflection that the ordained ministry requires.

It is common practice to end a preface such as this with words addressed to family and spouse. Though words are my core business, both as an ordained minister and teacher of theology, I cannot but feel inadequate to describe what they mean and
have meant without risking to sound cheap and utter mere cliché’s. Even so: I'll mention first my parents for initiating me to Jesus and his church. The church was never my idea. It just happened to me as my parents took me with them. I will always be grateful to them that they have shown me a community whose very existence is a gift. I came to see only years later that this holds a deeply theological truth: we do not choose the church, but we are received by the church.

In many ways my life-companion Grace, showed me and reminded me by her character and example, of what an ordained minister should look like. She truly lives up to her name. Not only by the graceful manner in which she raises our three children, but also by the open-minded mercy with which she invites others into our home. Though she never cared much about academic titles, this one is nonetheless dedicated to her. This is not in order to make up for all those countless hours spent in my study, but rather to name my indebtedness. For, as the song of U2 reminds us, ‘Grace’ is not only the name of a girl, but also ‘a thought that changed the world’. It is a confession of receiving and living life as a gift. Therefore, I could not but end with words of praise to the Giver of gifts, solo Deo gloria.

Aalsmeer, May 2017
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: CHALLENGES AND CONTROVERSIES

1.1. The Purpose of this Study

This study is motivated by the current controversy surrounding the recognition and implication of an official ministry characterized by ordination within Baptist churches. Ordination, which stems from the Latin ordinatre ('to order', 'to place in the right order'), is usually explained as the public act by which a person is set apart for the purpose of 'ordained' ministry in distinction of the ministry of the community, habitually accompanied by the rite of laying on of hands as the visible side of ministerial installation.\(^1\) Although widely practiced within various Christian traditions, it is striking that the appreciation of a distinct ordained ministry time and again meets great disagreement among free churches, including notably Baptists. Even though in the seventeenth century ordination was still a common practice among Baptists and Congregationalists,\(^2\) today its application has especially become controversial as it is frequently associated with hierarchic and exclusivist notions of ministry which are believed to be contrary to the 'priesthood of all believers' (1 Pet. 2:9) celebrated in congregational ecclesiology. It is therefore a legitimate question why Baptists ‘dissent’ from the broader Christian tradition on this point.\(^3\) Why can’t ordination be an appropriate way to describe and accentuate the character of the pastoral ministry in congregational ecclesiology? In recent decades the relevancy of this question has increased. Due to the collapse of institutional religion and its denominational partitions, the emphasis shifted toward local communities in anticipation of a wider observed

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process of 'congregationalization'. At the same time the recognition of ordained ministry has become more and more problematic, as it is closely associated with the oppressive powers of Christendom. It lies in my intent, therefore—although writing from a Baptist and Evangelical background—to contribute perspectives to the broader ecumenical debate which is seeking to redefine its theology of ordained ministry now that the old structures are disappearing. Rather than being denominationally bounded, this study consciously crosses denominational lines engaging conversation partners, both from within the Free Church tradition and beyond, who can inspire our search for a constructive theology of ordained ministry.

The way in which this study seeks to make such a contribution is by returning to the controversy over ordained ministry within sixteenth-century England where present day congregational ecclesiology has its roots. Specifically, this approach calls for a reconsideration and retrieval of the concept of ordained ministry as it was put forward by Robert Browne (c. 1550-1633), a pioneering author of congregational ecclesiology.

First of all, Browne’s writings represent a crucial stage in the formation of the so called ‘gathered churches’ that marks congregational ecclesiology to this day. A second reason for choosing Browne’s literature as primary focus of this study is his particular covenantal approach to ecclesiology, in which the corporate character of the church and the ordained ministry both have their place. While a re-orientation on the church as communio fidelium is widespread among first generation reformers, Browne explained the ecclesiality of the church on the basis of God’s covenanting presence. Thirdly, Browne’s theology becomes even more relevant given the fact that the debate over

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5 ‘Christendom’, as it is used in this study, refers to a civil constellation in which Christianity (as a religion) constitutes the determinative power that unites and directs a society’s culture and/or politics (corpus Christianum). See Arne Rasmusson, “Christendom,” in The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology, 97-98; and Ad de Brujin, Levend in Leviathan: Een onderzoek naar de theorie over ‘christendom’ in de politieke theologie van Oliver O’Donovan (Kampen: Kok, 2006), 21-26.

ordained ministry formed one of the central issues leading up to his break-away from the national church of England, which subsequently paved the way for many dissenting streams, including Congregationalists and Baptists. Fourth, the recent reinterpretation of διακονία reinstated the reformers’ interpretation of Ephesians 4:11 and reopened the need for re-reading sixteenth-century literature. Fifth, Browne’s Separatist position toward church and ordained ministry is increasingly worth of engaging, specifically in view of the Western society’s ‘post-Christendom’ condition. His literature represents an early critique of the corpus Christianum. It is therefore no coincidence that the contemporary marginalization of the church, particularly in Western-Europe, has renewed interest in those Christian traditions that have already, from early on, reflected upon the role of the church in the margins. For example, the missiologist Stefan Paas called for a serious engagement with early Free Church thinkers in contemporary ecclesiological reflection:

> Therefore, I think that we, when we try to find historical models to be church in a culture that is by and large alienated from church life, as we know it, must not find wisdom in those ecclesial traditions that were supported by the powers that be. We will have to look in the margins of history. Especially, I think of the ‘free church’ tradition—early Puritans and Anabaptists. In my opinion ecclesiological notions have been developed here, that can be of use now. These churches share some important characteristics that can be very relevant in a modern network society.

The contemporary ecclesiological interest in the Free Church tradition evokes the need for a systematic evaluation of these historical sources in light of current questions. In summary, a reconsideration and retrieval of Browne’s theology of ordained ministry could therefore be beneficial for today’s theological debate about recognition and implications of ordained ministry. In view of this objective, this study eventually seeks to combine historical theology (history of the concept of ordained ministry) and systematic theology (conceptual analysis of ordained ministry). Accordingly, it takes a different approach than the recent study of Paul Goodliff in 2010, which is more orientated toward practical theology and exclusively focused on debates within the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the re-emergence of sacramentalism. Nevertheless Goodliff’s study did
witness both the inadequacy of a thoroughgoing functionalistic understanding of ministry as well as the difficulties with the adoption of sacramental understandings of ordination. This tension is another reason to go looking for outlines for an acceptable theology of ordained ministry for contemporary congregational ecclesiology.

The above considerations lead to the following study, centered around a systematic-theological question: How can Robert Browne's Separatist ecclesiology contribute to a constructive theology of ordained ministry for contemporary congregational ecclesiology? To answer this question, this study faces a dual object. First, providing a sufficient formulation of Browne's concept of ordained ministry, and second, an assessment of Browne's contribution to contemporary debate. This combination of systematic theology and historical theology—inherent to the objective of this investigation—characterizes the present methodology as a ‘retrieval-study’, which will be further explained in the following paragraph (§ 1.2.). The rest of this first chapter will be dedicated to a further inquiry into both the systematic and historical aspects that this study anticipates. In the paragraphs § 1.3. and § 1.4. the particular challenges this study faces will be discussed—both from a historical and systematic perspective. Then, in § 1.5., an overview will be presented of the current state of research into Robert Browne’s literature. This status quaeestionis will help us to determine the remaining questions that this study needs to answer. Furthermore, in § 1.6., criteria are formulated to define the conditions to which any congregational theology of ordained ministry should comply with in order to be found appropriate. Three particular areas of controversy, representative of the difficulty surrounding ordained ministry in the Free Church tradition, will be therefore discussed in further depth. The specific objections found in this section will serve to establish the required criteria which will subsequently guide our analysis and evaluation of Browne’s contribution in view of providing constructive outlines for a theology of ordained ministry. Before we continue, however, first a few notes on the terminology used.

1. Within secondary literature various epithets are used to describe the ecclesiological model for a gathering church, such as Free Church ecclesiology, believers’ church ecclesiology, or congregational ecclesiology. These three terms all have their own emphasis and are frequently used complementary. ‘Free Church’ is directed towards the unbounded existence of these churches, first of state control, but sometimes also with regard to tradition and liturgy. It primarily has an external orientation, describing the

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11 Cf. “The phrase, free churches, is used in various ways—sometimes to designate those churches of congregational polity, sometimes those peculiarly distinguished by their liberal views. But properly the phrase designates those churches under the system of separation of church and state.” Sidney E. Mead, The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 103. Mead’s definition—usually without his third mark—is followed by multiple authors, see Howard A. Snyder, “The Marks of the Church,” in Evangelical Ecclesiology: Reality or
non-established character in opposition to state churches or national churches. Today this term has been overtaken by time, since, for instance in the United States as in the Netherlands, all churches exist officially separated from state control. Hence, ‘freedom’ is too broad and vague to function as ecclesiological determinator. This study will however refer to the Free Church tradition to denote the broader spectrum of Protestant denominations and streams who have historically distinguished themselves by their advocacy of a strict separation of church and state. The term ‘believers’ church’ (or believer’s church), originally coined by notable sociologist Max Weber, names the substance of church, namely the gathering of faithful and active believers. It is used primarily in opposition to the idea of a national church (in Dutch: volkskerk or staatskerk), in which people are members by mere registration due to infant baptism, irrespectively of their personal conviction. Unfortunately, the phrase ‘believers’s church’ does more or less insinuate that other ecclesial traditions do not exist as proper believers. James McClendon coined a similar non-denominational term, ‘small-b baptists,’ with which he referred to the broad tradition of churches of the Radical Reformation sharing an emphasis on the necessity of personal belief for ecclesial gathering, for baptism and for membership. McClendon’s proposal, however, excludes those traditions which hold to the constitutive force of the gathering of the faithful to define the ecclesiality of the church, but do not share the conviction of believer’s baptism.

In short, without wishing to detract from the particular usefulness of the aforementioned terms, this study will take as its common denominator the non-denominational and ecumenical validated term congregational ecclesiology to designate

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15 Already at the first World Conference on Faith and Order (Lausanne, 1927), the congregational ‘system’ was noted and appreciated as a particular and distinct ecclesiological ordering, alongside the episcopal and the presbyterian systems (see H. N. Bate, ed., Faith and Order Proceedings of the World Conference: Lausanne, August 3-21, 1927 [London: Illusion?, ed. John G. Stackhouse (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 93-96; Roger E. Olson, “Free Church Ecclesiology and Evangelical Spirituality,” in Evangelical Ecclesiology, 162-164, 168-172; Miroslav Volf, After Our Likeness: The Church in the Image of the Trinity (Sacra Doctrina; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 9 n2; and Kärkkäinen, An Introduction to Ecclesiology, 8, 16. A similar approach is taken by Curtis W. Freeman, adding ‘freedom’—essentially Mead’s third mark—to his list, see “Where Two or Three Are Gathered: Communion Ecclesiology in a Free Church,” PRSt 31, no. 3 (2004): 259 n3; also Christopher J. Ellis, Gathering: A Theology and Spirituality of Worship in Free Church Tradition (London: SCM Press, 2004), 3-5, 7-8; and Nigel G. Wright, Free Church, Free State: The Positive Baptist Vision (Millon Keynes: Paternoster, 2005), xx-xxii, and esp. 204-227.
the ecclesiological structure which is characteristic of the Free Church tradition, but
certainly not limited to it. The term ‘congregational’ with a lower case, therefore, needs
to be distinguished from the denominational label ‘Congregationalism’ which commonly
denotes English Independency from the seventeenth century onwards. As such,
congregational ecclesiology has its center of gravity in the intermediary role of the
gathering of believers to explain Christ’s presence in the church, in distinction from
ecclesiological models focusing on the intermediary presence of the ordained ministry or
the legitimate administration of Word and sacrament. Accordingly, the ‘one, holy,
catholic, and apostolic church’, confessed in the Nicene Creed, is believed to be there
where Christ is present in the local gathering (Lt. congregatio) of his faithful (cf. Mat.
18:20).

2. In contemporary literature, particularly practical ecclesiology, ordained
ministry is frequently substituted or included in the more functional term ‘leadership’. This study seeks to use expressively the theological vocabulary of ‘ordained ministry’ (German: Amt, Dutch: ambt), since leadership—as the broad and multiform capability to convince people ‘to follow you’—is something which happens in multiple ways and on various scales within churches, not necessarily by people in ministerial office. Leadership is a much broader category which does not exclude ministerial office but cannot be exclusively identified with, or reduced to, ministerial office either. If leadership is to be used, the question this study seeks to answer is: which particular form of leadership needs to be sustained by ordination? Or, to phrase it differently, this study aims to formulate theologically what kind of leadership is involved when people are in


18 Cf. “In short, everyone exercises leadership to varying degrees, for we all exercise relative influence in the variety of contexts in which we live. . . . Leadership, then, is an issue not for the clergy alone”. James Davison Hunter, To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 256; cf. Albert J. Remmelzwaal, Actief en afhankelijk: Een praktijktheorie voor leiderschap in kerkelijke gemeenten (Delft: Eburon, 2003), 128, 213ff.
ordained ministry. It has to be said that on some occasions the term leadership is used in order to be truthful to the respective author’s employment of terms.

3. Though continuing to be a point of controversy in ecclesiological debates, the question of the ordination of women lies outside the scope of this study. Others have addressed this questions emphatically elsewhere.¹⁹ My argument simply presumes ordained ministry to involve both women and men. Therefore, I will alternate using both ‘she’ and ‘he’ or both, when possible. When dealing with historical sources, however, I am conforming to the author’s use of terms.

1.2. Theology of Retrieval

The combination of historical theology and systematic theology this study anticipates finds its commonality in ecclesiology, the study of the church. For it has the church as source (historical tradition) and object (contemporary church).²⁰ It is this continuous reality of the church that connects historical theology to systematic theology. Historical theology is understood here as being particularly oriented toward the interpretation of and reflection upon primary (pre-modern) sources within a certain religious tradition, while systematic theology attempts to make conceptual and constructive articulations of Christian claims in view of the internal renewal of a particular religious tradition. Pressed by developments within contemporary church and society, systematic theology critically seeks to renew religious discourse through a continuous rereading of a religion’s authoritative sources.²¹ Thus, the historical methodology that is used here for the rereading of the authoritative tradition is embedded within a contemporary systematic interest.

John Webster has been accredited with naming this type of combined methodology a “theology of retrieval.”²² Theologies of retrieval seek, by way of careful

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¹⁹ See for relevant studies Janet Wootton, ed., This is Our Story: Free Church Women’s Ministry (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2007); Ian Jones, Kirsty Thorpe and Janet Wootton, eds., Women and Ordination in Christian Churches: International Perspectives (London: T&T Clark, 2008); and Almatine Leene, Triniteit, antropologie en ecclesiologie: Een kritisch onderzoek naar implicaties van de godsleer voor de positie van mannen en vrouwen in de kerk (Amsterdam: Buitjen en Schipperheijn Motief, 2013).


²² Cf. Webster, “Theologies of Retrieval,” 583-599; also Oliver D. Crisp, Retrieving Doctrine: Essays in Reformed Theology (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010), viii; J. Todd Billings, Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 2-7; and Alister E. McGrath, Christian Theology: An Introduction, Fifth edition (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), xxiii. Examples of ‘retrieval-studies’ that have been a
study of (pre-modern) theological documents, to generate historical arguments which then function as a resource and diagnostic “to identify what are taken to be misdirections in modern theology.” Todd Billings describes a theology of retrieval consequently as a ‘cross-cultural interaction’ with a pre-modern text: “A theologian of retrieval will explore these texts not as ‘history’ alone but also as conversation partners, thus allowing their thinking to go beyond the ordinary ways of thinking in the twenty-first century. Precisely because these thinkers can exceed the possibility of the present—challenging twenty-first century categories—their work is worth engaging.”

The methodology of retrieval is consistent with the increasing attention for resourcement among Baptists theologians, in order to rethink the Free Church tradition within the broader ecumenical conversation. The value of a comparative historical approach for ecclesiology has been demonstrated by Roger Haight in his monumental three-volume work Christian Community in History (2004-2008). In which he argues that “ecclesiology cannot be separated from the history of the church and the world in which it has existed along the tremendous help are Alco Meesters, God in drie woorden: Een systematisch-theologisch onderzoek naar de Cappadocische bijdrage aan het denken over God Drie-eng (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2003); Arnold Huigen, Divine Accommodation in John Calvin’s Theology: Analysis and Assessment (RHT, Bd. 16; Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 2011); and Maarten Wisse, Trinitarian Theology Beyond Participation: Augustine’s De Trinitate and Contemporary Theology (Studies in Systematic Theology; London: T&T Clark, 2011). My thanks go to Maarten Wisse, who referred me to this methodology.

Cf. “To use this metaphor of the heritage of a church community implies that there are pathways trodden in the past which still have definite meaning and relevance for the present, and for which the technical term is “tradition.” Paul Fiddes, Tracks and Traces: Baptist Identity in Church and Theology (SBHT, vol. 13: Eugene: Wipf and Stock, [2003], 2006), 1. In recent Baptist theology there is a renewed awareness of the importance of tradition (both Baptist tradition as the wider church tradition going back to the patres) as a crucial element in theological reflection, see for example Steven R. Harmon, Towards Baptist Catholicity: Essays on Tradition and the Baptist Vision (SBHT, vol. 27; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), 1-21; Brian Haymes, Ruth Gouldbourne, and Anthony R. Cross, On Being the Church: Revisiting Baptist Identity (SBHT, vol. 21; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), 49-51; Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 93-129; Stephen R. Holmes, Listening to the Past: The Place of Tradition in Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), esp. 1-17, 153-164; Philip E. Thompson, and Anthony R. Cross, eds. Recycling the Past or Researching History? Studies in Baptist Historiography and Myths (SBHT vol. 11; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005), 128-162; Timothy George, ed., Evangelicals and Nicene Faith: Reclaiming the Apostolic Witness (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), esp. xvii-xxiv; and Curtis W. Freeman, Contesting Catholicity: Theology for Other Baptists (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014), 4-8, 18.

Cf. “The Holy Spirit inspires and leads the churches each to rethink and reinterpret their tradition in conversation with each other, always aiming to embody the one Tradition in the unity of God’s Church.” A Treasure in Earthen Vessels: An Instrument for an Ecumenical Reflection on Hermeneutics (F&O paper 182; Geneva: WCC, 1998), § 32.
way.”27 Historical research is required to trace principles and axioms that typify a particular confessional perspective on the church in order to come to a constructive and contemporary ecclesiology.28 Applied to the current study: when we aim to develop a congregational theology of ordained ministry it requires a thorough understanding, not only of today’s questions and disagreements, but also of the basic convictions that characterize a congregational view of ordained ministry. Practical theologians Ruard Ganzevoort and Jan Visser, in their book on pastoral theology, similarly note the importance of acquaintance with an ecclesial tradition for a minister’s self-awareness: “What are my convictions, what are the inspirational sources for my existence, how do I relate to others, and how did I became who I am today? These are the questions that the pastor should ask regularly in order to function properly.”29

In line with the above, this study will treat Robert Browne as a conversation partner from the past who has something to contribute to the present debate about ordained ministry. Browne’s literature will help to determine ‘what was at stake’ then, to review and enrich our thinking on ordained ministry today. The historical challenges this study as a result faces will be explained below in § 1.3. However, in order to retrieve his theology of ordained ministry for the contemporary church, as this study contemplates, two current theologians have been selected to inspire the congregational dialogue on ordained ministry, notably in view of the challenges the Western church faces in post-Christendom, as discussed in more detail in § 1.4. First, the provocative proposal of Stanley Martin Hauerwas (1940), the self-proclaimed ‘high-church Mennonite’. In his extensive career he has written particularly in the area’s of character ethics, political theology and ecclesiology. In this study, Hauerwas will help navigate a theology of ordained ministry in view of questions with regard to consumerism, professionalization, and moral accountability. And second, Kevin Jon Vanhoozer (1957), whose work expressively aims for a catholic-evangelical orthodoxy. The majority of his work is specifically concerned with the field of theological hermeneutics, theology proper, and its relation to ecclesiology. In this study Vanhoozer’s literature will be consulted for his extensive dialogue with postmodernism, specifically its suspicion of authority, the relation between doctrine and practice, and between Scripture, tradition and community. Though Hauerwas and Vanhoozer are arguably leading theological authors whose books are widely read, their views on ordained ministry are less known. Yet it is striking that

28 For Haight’s methodology, see Christian Community in History, 1:17-66.
both have expressed their concerns with the state of the ordained ministry,30 and have addressed the challenges facing church ministry extensively within the broader framework of their respective work. For precisely their integrative perspective on ethics, hermeneutics, ecclesiology and the role of ordained ministry, this study considers Hauerwas and Vanhoozer to be important and inspiring voices who can bring Browne’s sixteenth-century arguments on par with the systematic theological challenges of today.

1.3. Historical Challenges
The retrieval of Robert Browne’s covenantal concept of ordained ministry requires a thorough reconsideration of his position amidst the English Reformation,31 and specifically the Puritan movements of Presbyterians and Separatists, among whom the congregational concept of a ‘gathering church’ was born.32 The notions of ‘visible godly’ and independence of state control lead certain men to the conviction that separation from

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the English church was the only viable way to establish a church of faithful believers. This paragraph presents an overview of the three historical challenges with which a retrieval of Robert Browne is confronted.

1. Robert Browne is widely regarded as the embodiment of these sixteenth-century ‘hasty Puritans’, who broke away from the Church of England. The Puritan movement came to existence after a period of church renewal which began with the Act of Supremacy (1534) under the reign of Henry VIII, radicalized into an outspoken Protestant reformation under his son Edward VI, and reached after the Marian intermezzo a ‘settlement’ under Henry’s daughter Elizabeth I. These so-called ‘Puritans’ or ‘Precisionists’ were disappointed with Elizabeth’s via media, which failed to adequately reform the church to the demands of Scripture as they saw fit. The Puritan pursuit came to an absolute height during the 1570’s, marking the rise of a new generation of Puritans, who more explicitly associated with presbyterian ecclesiology, as notably exemplified by Reformed church of Geneva, and advocated a ‘turn to the local congregation’. They strongly opposed the episcopal hierarchy (seen as a replacement of the authority of Christ), the inequality of ministers, the neglect of preaching and the incompetence of local ministers to preach Scripturally. Stronger than the earlier generation of Puritans did, these men stressed the need for the reformation of church government by placing the emphasis on a local ministry appointed by a local church, and

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here and there, usually as a catalyst or springboard for further studies. Therefore, it is worthwhile to offer a more comprehensive analysis of Browne’s literature, and certainly so, given the prominence the issue of ordained ministry receives therein. Baptist historian William Brackney calls Robert Browne accordingly, “the fountainhead of Free Church understanding of ordination.”38 Paul Fiddes suggests likewise that more research has to be done to understand “the theological ‘depth’ of the concept of covenant” as Browne used it.39 Our study aims to present a theological reconsideration of Browne’s covenantal ecclesiology, and specifically his concept of ordained ministry.

2. Given the limited attention to Browne’s theological ideas, it is striking to observe the outspokenness with which his legacy is depicted in secondary literature. Already in the early seventeenth century ‘Troublechurch Browne’ was considered a byword for rashness and intemperance. Similar descriptions have continued in the twentieth century historiography. Marshall M. Knappen described Browne as “hot-tempered and contentious,” with “apparently maddest theories.”40 Erik Routley speaks of a “stormy and bewildered character,”41 and more recently Diarmaid MacCulloch called Browne “an unstable and violent character.”42 In Carter Lindberg’s influential textbook *The European Reformations* (2010), Browne’s ideas live on “reminiscent of Karlstadt’s understanding of reform,”43 and Ian Hazlett goes even further in his judgment, when he judges Browne’s ideas essentially to be Anabaptist.44 Of particular force is Peter Lake’s study, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (1982), in which Browne and his entourage are regarded as a ‘populist revolt’ (see § 1.5.3.).45 Lake’s rendering of the English Separatists is prominently followed by Miroslav Volf in his ecclesiological study *After Our Likeness* (see § 1.6.3.). The problem with these portrayals is its lack of sufficient support by historical and theological arguments based upon primary research. A retrieval of Browne’s theology of ordained ministry, therefore, requires a thorough re-examination of his legacy against the background of existent ecclesiological convictions.

3. Additionally, congregational ecclesiology is often associated with—and not seldom disbanded for—its presumed emphasis on voluntarism, the autonomy of the local church, moral perfectionism, and rejection of all outward institutions, including the

45 Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church*, 89.
ministerial offices, synods, and confessions. A picture that Alister McGrath reads back into Browne’s literature: “The essence of the congregational model is that of local, autonomous congregations that are not under any centralized control. . . . It can be seen in Robert Browne’s 1582 treatise Reformation Without Tarrying for Any.” However, as will become clear in this study, this persistent caricature is based on misreading of Browne’s actual argument. Nourishing the impression that, in the words of Patrick Collinson, many historians researched the sixteenth and seventeenth-century dissenters “for their value of denominational posterity.” Similar concerns can be made with regard to Polly Ha’s recent study, English Presbyterianism (2011), investigating seventeenth-century ecclesiological developments within English Puritan circles. She makes a firm differentiation between presbyterian and congregational polity. The problem is that Ha’s estimation of congregationalism is for the most part based upon a reading of the seventeenth-century Separatist writer Henry Jacob. A period, as she also herself admits, of “congregational and presbyterian proclivities and sharpened divisions.” However, Robert Browne developed his ecclesiology in a period of time in which today’s denominational positions were not yet sharply defined. A study of this epoch in ecclesiastical history might review our understanding of the theological convictions that motivated the development of a ‘gathering ecclesiology’ and lead to a more nuanced application of the labels ‘presbyterian’ and ‘congregational’. In short, a thorough reading of Browne’s literature will help identify unnecessary contradictions between presbyterian and congregational models of the church, and henceforth provide a new impetus to ecumenical conversations.

1.4. Systematic Challenges

Based on the above, we could already conclude that a historical study of Browne’s writings would be very fascinating and important for the understanding of this pioneering phase in the history of congregational ecclesiology. It would deepen our knowledge of the fundamental circumstances and convictions which induced the huge variety of nonconformist traditions which can be placed under the larger heading Free Church tradition. Yet, it is predominantly in the intent of this research to probe for the systematic relevance of Browne’s views regarding the relation between congregational ecclesiology and ordained ministry to make a contribution to contemporary theology. The function of this present paragraph is to provide a background of current debates that have made ordained ministry controversial and/or problematic and necessitate a

46 See Willem Balke, Omgang met de Reformatoren (Kampen: Groot Goudriaan, 1992), 119-120.
50 Ha, English Presbyterianism, 49.
systematic reassessment. Before entering into these challenges, a note on the use of terms. The Western church witnessed a process which is commonly termed ‘secularization’ at the expense of (institutional) religion. In this study secularization is understood with the three diagnostics of post-Christian, post-Christendom and postmodernity, as suggested by Stefan Paas. Together these terms denote i.a. the quantitative decline of Christians, the marginalization of the Christian church, a suspicion toward institutional authority, a pluralization of truth, and a dominant consumerist ethos. These observations have brought new debates and challenges to the theology of ordained ministry as part of the systematic reflection on the church.

1. Western society is commonly typified a consumer society. The editors of Religion in Consumer Society (2013) define a consumer society as “a culture of consumption, meaning that ‘the dominant values’ of this society are not only ‘organized through consumption practices but are also in some sense derived from them’, be it well-being, hedonism, happiness, personal satisfaction, choice, sovereignty, individuality, reflexivity or autonomy.” The consumerist ethos, especially its emphasis on individual choice, has had a significant influence upon the remains of (institutional) religion as well. Consequently, there is an increasing tendency toward a more experiential form of religion, in which self-expression through choice has become the sole stimulus: “religion shifts from obedience and a compliance to pre-existing schemes to personal commitment.” The consequences for the church and the role of the ministry are substantial. Gerard Mannion speaks of a “crisis of legitimation” (viz. Lyotard’s ‘incredulity towards metanarratives’) which caused ministerial authority to become

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inherently suspect. In short, ordained ministers have lost the self-evident authority which was hitherto linked to the given fact of bearing ministerial office. Religious authorities, including those of Christian origin, whose authority is worn across the full spectrum of society, no longer exist. This has everything to do with what Anthony Giddens calls the “transformation of intimacy,” in which commitment to authority can only exist independent from external criteria (viz. kinship, social duty, traditional obligations etc.). Meaning, that ordained ministers can no longer rely on a natural authority since authority is linked to ‘trust’ which requires personal commitment. Likewise, missiologist Lesslie Newbigin points out the shape of authority within the framework of voluntary religion: “Authority that is merely imposed from outside is no true authority. We are so made that we need to see for ourselves that something is true or right.”

Voluntary religion, according to Giddens, effectively altered the role of religious authorities into religious ‘experts’. Mannion, in his book on ecclesiology within postmodernity, argues that churches will therefore need to “embrace dialogue, become less authoritarian, and develop more communitarian-oriented structures of authority and governance,” to be still relevant to modern times. The broader ‘congregational’ tendency among churches is therefore not unsurprising, observing that these anti-institutional changes in Western society appear, at least on a superficial level, to be congruent with the “democratic ethos” with which congregational ecclesiology is associated.

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57 Giddens, Modernity and Self-Identity, 6.


59 “The expert, or the specialist, is quite different from the ‘authority’, where this term is understood in the traditional way. Except where authority is sanctioned by the use of force (the ‘authorities’ of the state and legal authority), it becomes essentially equivalent to specialist advice.” Giddens, Modernity and Self-Identity, 195.

60 Mannion, Ecclesiology and Postmodernity, 118.

61 See for example Harper and Metzger, Exploring Ecclesiology, 197.
the basis of his or her office, but can only offer some free religious advice to those who voluntarily decide to accept it. These developments compel this study to answer the following questions: Is authority a necessary part of ordained ministry? Can there be authority without some form of dominance, force, or coercion? If so, how can ordained ministry still be explained in terms of ‘authority’? These questions mandate a thorough systematic contribution from a congregational perspective not only to enrich the broader ecumenical discussion concerning the theology of ordained ministry, but also to reconsider the very nature of congregational ecclesiology itself.

2. The passing of the self-evident position of religious authority is paralleled by a rise of secular notions of profession and leadership to accommodate the role of ordained ministry in more acceptable terminology. In 2002 practical theologian Gerben Heitink published a vivid account of the developments concerning ordained ministry from the Reformation to the present day in Western society. He observes a progressive professionalization and personalization.62 Where ministers occupied positions of public and cultural significance in the sixteenth until the nineteenth century, the twentieth century reduced the ministerial office to a profession like any other. As a result, the emphasis is placed more and more on the personal characteristics of the specific individual: does she communicate well? Is he a unifying and charismatic personality? Is she good in youth ministry? And, importantly, is he or she an honest and authentic believer? Sake Stoppels recently added another area of tension, between the demands from the core membership and those from peripheral members, conceivably bringing the minister in a dilemmatic position: whose needs to serve?63 In practice this means a continuous broadening of the ministerial tasks (preaching, spiritual guidance, church growth specialist, manager), suited to the increasing spiritual needs of people.64 Heitink’s evaluation corresponds with Zygmunt Bauman’s depiction of the postmodern search for identity and approval: “They need reassurance that they can do it.”65 However, as people’s needs have become a benchmark for ministry, ministers have found themselves in an ambiguous position: “His work is amidst his employers, and he is financially dependent upon the ones over whom he is appointed as shepherd and teacher.”66 Similar observations have led a diverse group of theologians to the conclusion that the ministerial

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64 See Heitink, Biografie van de dominee, 254, 261-267; also Gauthier, Woodhead, and Martikainen, ”Introduction,” 20-21.


66 “Hij werkt temidden van zijn ‘werkgevers’en is financieel afhankelijk van degenen, over wie hij als herder en leraar gesteld is.” Heitink, Biografie van de dominee, 220.
office finds itself in a ‘crisis’. It is amidst this crisis, that Heitink notices a reemergence of the term ‘leadership’, yet now stripped of its authoritarian soundings. He comments: “The emphasis is now on the authenticity and integrity of this leadership, alike a shift from office to person. No wonder that many people feel overburdened and ask for appropriate measures to strengthen the position of the minister.” To counter this development, Heitink argues that the future of ordained ministry needs to find a healthy balance between the poles of person, office and profession. Personality and professionalism are not unimportant, yet the language of “[office] protects the minister against the personalization and professionalization of his profession. It provides a barrier against bureaucracy.” Furthermore, Heitink anticipates the dawn of the era of the singular all-round ordained minister serving in one congregation. Churches should aim for shared ministry, maybe even create a supra-local but non-hierarchical office (pastor pastorum), and reorient on the importance of locality and a more external driven attitude (‘open church’). For only amidst such conditions the role of ordained ministry will regain relevance: “keeping the congregation to its mystery and inviting outsiders to join in.” Heitink’s analysis further reaffirms the need for a study from a Free Church tradition that connects historical insights with contemporary questions. Especially since the professionalism of today increasingly pulled the ordained ministry out of the realm of theological reflection and made it the exclusive property of pragmatic methodologies. This raises questions such as: How can a congregational theology of ministry bring balance to this one-sided approach to ordained ministry? And, how can ordained ministry be in harmony with personal and professional demands?


68 “De nadruk komt te liggen op de authenticiteit en integriteit van dit leiderschap, eveneens een verschuiving van ambt naar persoon. Geen wonder dat velen zich overvraagd voelen en vragen om passende maatregelen die de positie van de predikant versterken.” Heitink, Biografie van de dominee, 266.

69 Heitink, Biografie van de dominee, 268.

70 Cf. Heitink, Biografie van de dominee, 271.

71 See Heitink, Biografie van de dominee, 272, 275, 279-280.

72 “Juist in een open kerk komt het aan op het benadrukken van de kern van het ambt, de gemeente bewaren bij haar geheim en buitenstaanders hiertoe uitnodigen.” Heitink, Biografie van de dominee, 282.
3. The twentieth century shift from Christendom (corpus Christianum) to a post-Christendom state of affairs has become a main item on the theological agenda. The marginalization of Christianity in Western societies challenges the contemporary church to reinvent itself in this new circumstance.\(^{73}\) As a result, the importance of mission and missiology has once again returned to the center of ecclesiological investigations. Inspired by missiologists like Lesslie Newbigin and David Bosch, a renewed attentiveness developed with regard to the missional nature of the church—called and sent to participate in God’s own ‘mission’ (missio Dei) as a witness of the gospel.\(^{74}\) Several new ecclesial initiatives have seen daylight in the last two decades trying to find new ways of ‘being church’ with a post-Christendom mindset. Consequently, these so-called fresh expressions, missional churches, and/or emerging churches challenge traditional churches to face the changing times and amend or contextualize its practices, including the role of ordained ministry.\(^{75}\) In his study Crossroads (2012), Robert Doornenbal explored the role of church leadership within the ‘Emerging-Missional Conversation’ (EMC). He concludes from his inquiries: “Ideally, authority and power are not institutional, positional or based on academic credentials. This means that authority and power are not vested in an ordained clergy, denominational staff, self-proclaimed ‘experts’ or an intellectual elite.”\(^{76}\) Hence, the old ‘Christendom idea’ of a hierarchical ordained minister needs to shift in order to meet the present demands. Missiologists and authors within the missional church movement, such as notably Michael Frost and Alan

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\(^{73}\) See for example Barry A. Harvey, Another City: An Ecclesiological Primer for a Post-Christian World (Christian Mission and Modern Culture; Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999), esp. 64-94, 135-165.


Hirsch, view ordained ministry generally as an offspring of Christendom. At the same time they also regret the more current development of ministers into ecclesiastical CEO’s. Instead of the classic threefold pattern or the manager-shaped ministry, they argue for the retrieval of the charismatic pattern of the fivefold ministry as described in Ephesians 4:11, shared leadership and bi-vocational pastors. The idea of ‘every member ministry’ is pressed even further in the post-Christendom concept launched by the English missiologist Stuart Murray. Murray explicitly makes his case for a “multi-voiced church” against the institutions that came with Christendom. He derives his proposal for a post-Christendom reconfiguration of ordained ministry predominantly from Ephesians 4:11, which he reads as an incentive to communal empowerment. Murray therefore entirely drops the term ‘minister’ and adopts the more functional term ‘leadership’. Since Christendom designates the retreat of a charismatic and free community to a dominant and controlling form of worship by hierarchical clergy, he aims for a church that centers more around the equipment and empowerment of every member. Murray admits that a church needs the equipment by “apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers,” yet he disputes that the aforementioned roles are necessarily ‘leaders’, and that ‘leadership’ is required for the exercise of these gifts. He states that the unhealthy and dominant role of church leaders has led to undue expectations: “They expect their ministers to be attentive pastors and develop strategies to reverse long-term decline, but demand well-crafted sermons each week, whose preparations uses up an inordinate amount of their time.” Murray suggests that with the recovery of the harmonious church of Ephesians the church will be able to reconnect with its missional calling and lose the hierarchical and clericalist leadership, or what he calls, “[t]he Christendom mindset.” He writes: “The role of leaders in post-Christendom churches—operating accountably in a team context with others whose gifts and perspectives are different—is to empower rather than perform, develop processes to sustain the community and equip

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78 See especially Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, 166-175, 210-222.

79 Murray, *Church after Christendom*, 185. It has to be said that the renewed awareness for ‘the ministry of the laity’ is not a recent phenomenon. Already in the middle of twentieth century, between the third (Lund, 1952) and fourth (Montreal, 1963) Faith and Order Conference, under inspiration of Hendrik Kraemer, new attentiveness rose that all baptized have a responsibility in ministry and not only those ordained (see Collins, “Theology of Ministry in the Twentieth Century,” 14-15). The difference with the present argument for ‘every member ministry’ is that the latter is made at the expense of an ordained ministry.

80 See Murray, *Church after Christendom*, esp. 185-187.

81 Murray, *Church after Christendom*, 187.

82 Murray, *Church after Christendom*, 188.

83 Murray, *Church after Christendom*, 191.
those who really are on the front line.” Though Murray recognizes that some post-Christendom proposals may have evolved more out of a postmodern aversion of authority, he still considers the general “de-emphasizing” of leadership useful.

Similarly, Robert Doornenbal observes two developments that reveal a broader turn to a more organic paradigm of church ministry. First, leaders derive their influence from their character, competence, gifts, and moral, spiritual, or inspirational authority. As a result, personal experience has become more important than training. Although many newer ecclesial forms do continue to have an ordained ministry, they generally tend to de-emphasize its importance: “Leadership is thus interpreted in functional rather than sacramental ways.” Consequently, terms like ‘ministerial office’ or ‘ordained minister’, as well as the layman/clergyman division, are substituted for the more functional term ‘leadership’. And second, the form of ministry is mostly one that distributes power, and sees authority as a collective property. Leadership is a function of the common ministry. In sum, Doornenbal perceives a turn to ‘flat’ churches that emphasizes the community over individual ministry. Yet, he too concludes that existing definitions are still without theological content and run the risk of becoming too idealistic, due to its ignorance vis-à-vis the power of informal ‘charismatic’ leaders and the lack of sufficient accountability. Comparable prudence is expressed by the authors of the Dutch church-plant-manual Als een kerk opnieuw begint (‘When a church starts over’, 2008). They too caution against the tendency to place decision-making in the hands of one, or only a few people. Doornenbal suggests therefore that the future lies in a missional type of leadership that seeks to facilitate learning and helps to transform a church into a learning community: “Leaders who learn are, furthermore, not afraid of looking at their own role and leadership style, when they are present in the midst of change.”

Doornenbal’s practical research asks for an evaluation from a systematic point of view. Several questions come into play: is an ordained ministry an obstacle for the missionary calling of the church? If not, what kind of character suits ordained office in an anti-authoritarian age? What is the relation between the collective authority and ministerial authority? And, what distinguishes ordained ministry from non-ordained/lay ministry? This study seeks to critically engage these challenges of missional theology into a rethinking of ordained ministry for congregational ecclesiology.

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84 Murray, Church after Christendom, 191.
85 Murray, Church after Christendom, 192-193.
86 Doornenbal, Crossroads, 178.
87 Doornenbal, Crossroads, 179-180.
88 “The democratic process, which often works well within an established church in stable circumstances, is viewed within church plants as time-consuming, complex and not agile enough. The result is often the type of leadership in which the decision-making is done by one or only a few people. At the same time this happens in an informal sphere where ‘the lines are short’, and the leader consults others before making a decision.” Noort, Paas, De Roest, Stoppels, Als een kerk opnieuw begint, 277-278.
89 Doornenbal, Crossroads, 223; also Noort, a.o. Als een kerk opnieuw begint, 276.
4. On the other side of the theological spectrum several attempts are made to rediscover sacramental theology. Several Protestant theologians, including a significant group of Baptist and Free Church theologians, seek to tackle the current crisis with a sacramental understanding of ministry. Paul Goodliff, in the aforementioned study, introduced the term ‘sacramental turn’ to capture this significant change. Some of its representatives are, with some irony, designated as ‘Bapto-Catholics’. The reason for this reconnection with sacramental theology has to do with an increasing weariness with the dominant functionalistic approach to ministry (viz. an ‘everyone can’ mentality). One of the most outspoken representatives of this turn is the English theologian John Colwell, who wrote an extensive sacramental theology called Promise and Presence (2005). He attributes the contemporary embrace of ‘every member ministry’ first of all to a shift in the interpretation of the priesthood of all believers. And second, he perceives the Charismatic movement to have produced an environment—placing the emphasis on individual’s giftedness independent of ecclesial institutions—that failed to recognize the specific call of a separated ministry by ordination. Ironic, therefore, is his conclusion that especially in the Charismatic movement strong structures of leadership emerged, which are “in many respects more overly clericalist than the clericalism they previously


92 Cf. “As the initial empirical data was analyzed it became clear that an unexpected trend was present, what I term the ‘sacramental turn’.” Goodliff, Ministry, Sacrament and Representation, 1.

93 See for a study of this ‘stream’, Cameron H. Jorgenson, “Bapto-Catholicism: Recovering Tradition and Reconsidering the Baptist Identity,” (PhD dissertation, Baylor University, August 2008), esp. 3-5. The wording has been positively acclaimed by Ralph Wood, yet opponents also tend to use it in a negative way. Foundation was the document known as the ‘Baptist Manifesto’ (see “Re-Envisioning Baptist Identity: A Manifesto for Baptist Communities in North America,” PRSt 24, no. 3 [1997]: 303-310), composed by eminent theologians like Curtis Freeman, James McClendon, Barry Harvey, a.o. Recently two of its authors identified publicly with ‘Baptist Catholicity’, see Barry Harvey, Can These Bones Live: A Catholic Baptist Engagement with Ecclesiology, Hermeneutics, and Social Theory (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008); and Freeman, Contesting Catholicity, esp. 1-20.


95 See Colwell, Promise and Presence, 213-218.
repudiated.” In reaction, he proposes a return to a form of sacramentalism. Interestingly, certainly in relation to the above, is his reference to Ephesians 4:11 which he considers as an explicit argument for a ministry separated by ordination, “as a means through which the Church becomes that to which it has been called and for which it has been constituted.” In the end, Colwell’s exploration of sacramental theology brings him to adopt distinct priestly language to denote the nature of ordained ministry, as representatives of God to the people in Word and Sacrament and of the people to God in prayer and sacrament: “To affirm a sacramental understanding of ministry is not just to affirm that one has been separated to perform a series of kerygmatic, liturgical, and sacramental functions—it is rather that one has been separated to be oneself a living sacrament, a living instrumental means of God’s grace, a priest.” Correspondingly, ordination implies and effects “the actuality of a new being,” not unlike baptism, by which the church attests that the person in question is indeed called by God to this ministry as “as a gift of the ascended Christ to his Church.” Clearly, Colwell understands ordination as an expression of God’s promise in Ephesians 4:11. The different roles mentioned by Paul in this text do in fact constitute a single Christian ministry that continues Christ’s incarnation in all its manifestations: “pastoral and priestly, prophetic and apostolic, didactic and evangelistic.” How far-reaching Colwell’s adoption of sacramental theology goes, appears moreover from his affirmation of ordination’s indelible character. Hence, an ordained minister can never be ‘un-ordained’ or ‘re-ordained’ regardless of his or her moral conduct. For it is not the church that calls, but it is God through his Spirit who calls ministers and separates them to be sent to the church and to the world. Even though Colwell does affirm the need for ministerial accountability to the church, this could in no way affect the ordained status of a minister. With Colwell’s explicit sacramentalism, which is very close to

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96 Colwell, Promise and Presence, 218. Similar observations have been made concerning the Dutch context, see Ganzvoort and Visser, Zorg voor het verhaal, 155; Otto de Bruijne, Peter Pit en Karin Timmerman, Ooit evangelisch: De achterdeur van evangelische gemeenten (Kampen: Uitgeverij Kok, 2009), 87-90; and Henk A. Bakker, “Finding a Place of Holiness: Towards a Typological Characterization of Evangelical Churches in the Netherlands,” in Evangelical Theology in Transition, 22.

97 His earlier distinction between ‘sacramental’ and ‘sacrament’ (see Colwell, “The Sacramental Nature of Ordination,” 232-233) is nuanced in his Promise and Presence, 3: “The tentative (and perhaps non-sustainable) distinction between the sacraments and the sacramental will recur throughout this book as a means of avoiding unnecessary and unhelpful semantic squabbles.” The difference between ‘sacramental’ and ‘sacrament’ also seems to have a new content. The first as “sacramental entities that confer context, definition, and validity on all other ecclesial sacramental action and event”. As a result ordination now no longer is (only) ‘sacramental’ but one of the seven ‘sacraments’ (cf. baptism, confirmation, Lord’s Supper, cleansing, healing, ministry, marriage).

98 Colwell, Promise and Presence, 215-216.
99 Colwell, Promise and Presence, 219.
100 Colwell, Promise and Presence, 222.
101 Colwell, Promise and Presence, 227
102 See Colwell, Promise and Presence, 222-224.
sacerdotalism, an antithesis has become manifest which is sometimes categorized as a difference between a functional view (ordained ministry as ‘a way of doing’) and an ontological view (ordained ministry as ‘a way of being’). The object of this study is to search for a way to bring these two approaches closer to each other, and evaluate the possibility of sacramental theology in light of congregational ecclesiology. Therefore we need to answer the following questions: to what extent can sacramental theology regain a sense of ministerial authority and legitimacy in day to day practice? Can congregational ecclesiology and sacramental theology go together? And what about the priesthood of all believers and ministerial accountability?

In conclusion, we can say that our search for a contemporary theology of ordained ministry faces some considerable tensions: between ministerial authority and voluntarism, between the singular minister and the ministry of the whole membership, between profession and vocation, between being and doing, and between charisma and special ordination. As it turns out, the contemporary ministerial controversy is directly related to the confusion surrounding the purpose and role of the church itself and its place in contemporary society. Subsequently, there is substantial disagreement with regard to the ideal role of ordained ministry in contemporary theology and praxis; expressly striking is the conflicting interpretation of Ephesians 4:11. The intent of this study is to review these present challenges through a comprehensive reading of Robert Browne’s literature. For he too sought to articulate a theology of ordained ministry in the context of controversy. As in our days, he developed his view in relation to questions regarding to church and state, increasing professionalism, questions over hierarchy and ministerial inequality and a rising lay involvement. In the rest of this chapter I will further deepen the historical and systematic challenges as described in the paragraphs so far. In § 1.5. an account will be presented of the status quaestionis in secondary literature regarding Robert Browne. It will provide us with the questions which are yet to be answered in order to formulate a satisfactory description of Browne’s concept of ordained ministry. And secondly, in § 1.6., an exploration will be offered regarding the main objections toward the recognition and practice of ministerial ordination in congregational ecclesiology. This paragraph will subsequently supply the criteria which

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103 This study will distinguish between ‘functional’, ‘sacramental’ and ‘sacerdotal’ interpretations of ordination. Although both interpretations refer to God’s provision of grace through creaturely mediation, sometimes coined as ‘real presence’—and thus to be distinguished from mere functional symbolism—, sacerdotalism presupposes this grace to be (mechanically) distributed ex opere operato by human hand. Cf. Bakker, “The Roaring Side of the Ministry,” 23. For various elaborate studies into sacramental theology, see Martien A. Brinkman, Schepping en sacrament: Een oecumenische studie naar de reikwijdte van het sacrament als heilzaam symbool in een weerbarstige werkelijkheid (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 1991), esp. 166-171; Boersema, Heavenly Participation, esp. 21-26 and 185-190; and Fowler, More Than A Symbol, esp. 248-253.

we will need to guide the retrieval of Browne’s theology of ministry in the contemporary debate.

1.5. Ordained Ministry in Browne’s Historiography

The existing research on Robert Browne is mostly limited to the historical reconstruction of his life story. Analysis of his theological heritage is scarce and often addressed only in the sidelines or used as a ‘springboard’ to later theological developments. In this section an overview will be presented of the widespread comments found relating to the research of the concept of ordained ministry in Browne’s ecclesiology, beginning in the late nineteenth century until today. This paragraph will close with a brief survey of the main questions that remain yet to be answered.

1.5.1. Browne as Democrat

The history of ‘Browne research’ sets off with the first author with whom “modern critical historiography of the English Separatists really began,” namely Henry Martyn Dexter. As an American theologian and Congregational minister Henry M. Dexter published in 1880 his extensive The Congregationalism of the last Three Hundred Years. He perceives Robert Browne’s influence to be beyond measure. He builds his interpretation largely on Browne’s A True and Short Declaration (1583), at that time only recently discovered. Crucial in Dexter’s understanding is Browne’s second visit to Cambridge, at which he decided to break with the Church of England primarily because he came to the conclusion that preachers were not to be authorized by bishops, but by the community of a local parish. However, in Dexter’s estimation it was not until his experiences in Norwich that Browne “thoroughly discovered and restated the original Congregational way.” While Dexter does not rule out the possible influence of Anabaptism, he explicitly mentions the influence of Richard Greenham on the young Browne. Unfortunately, Dexter only briefly touches upon Browne’s convictions concerning his ecclesiology. The voluntary state of this gathering leads him to equal Browne’s ecclesiology with pure spiritual democracy, though of course, “Browne had no idea of being a democrat, or that he was teaching democracy.” His conception of church government, writes Dexter, “was of the

108 Dexter, The Congregationalism of the Last Three Hundred Years, 66-67, 70.
109 See Dexter, The Congregationalism of the Last Three Hundred Years, 72, 89-92.
110 Dexter, The Congregationalism of the Last Three Hundred Years, 106.
absolute monarchy of Christ over his church” but reigning “through as many regents as there are individual subjects.” Subsequently, Browne saw ordained office primarily in terms of teaching and guiding a democratic church. However Dexter’s analysis remains rather ambivalent, for he also writes that Browne understood ordained ministry “to be over them in the Lord, to lead them as a shepherd his sheep.” Nevertheless, since Browne declared the presbytery nonessential to the church, Dexter celebrates his ecclesiology for being a remedy for the fatal defect of the Presbyterian ecclesiology.

Three decades later, in 1910, Frederick J. Powicke wrote the only independent monograph ever published about Robert Browne’s life. However, with only 82 pages, it can hardly be considered extensive. In the last part Powicke offers a concise overview of the basic tenure of Browne’s ecclesiology and his developments. Central to Browne’s pioneering endeavor is his “clear enough grasp of the principle that the civil government should leave the Church, as a spiritual institution, to rule itself freely under Christ.” Powicke significantly distinguishes between Browne’s ‘pre-mature’ understanding of the church and later concepts of Free Church ecclesiology. Moreover Browne is said to have recognized the duty of the magistrate to force a pastor to his duties, and also the supreme role of synods over local churches. Pertaining to the internal structure of the church, the ordained offices and the sacraments, Powicke does not come much further than a rough sketch. He briefly mentions the five different offices (pastor, teacher, elders, deacons and widows) which Browne discerned, and emphasizes that primarily the pastor and teacher had to be appointed with the general agreement of the church. Subsequently, Powicke writes,

[O]rdination follows, and is the work of elders, or forwardest, who must pronounce them as called or authorized by God and so received by the church. Usually it is accompanied by prayer and the imposition of hands; but the latter is not essential, and if it be turned into a matter of ‘pomp or superstition’ it ‘ought to be left’.  

Though Powicke’s presentation specifically addresses ordained ministry and ordination, he neglects to provide a bigger picture, nor does he adequately explain how Browne’s concept relates to the church covenant. In his conclusion, Powicke acknowledges Browne’s “pure Congregationalism,” yet also states that, since Browne never abandoned acknowledgement of the right of the Magistrate to reform the church according to the

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111 Dexter, The Congregationalism of the Last Three Hundred Years, 106-107.
112 See Dexter, The Congregationalism of the Last Three Hundred Years, 96-107.
113 Dexter, The Congregationalism of the Last Three Hundred Years, 110.
115 Powicke, Robert Browne, 65.
Word of God, and preferred the civil before the episcopal rule in Church, he should be regarded “an Erastian Congregationalist.”

A landmark in the research of English Dissent was made by the British historian Champlin Burrage, who published his two-volume *The Early English Dissenters* in 1912. In a chapter on Robert Browne, a first connection is made with, what Burrage calls, the accidental congregationalism of Richard Fitz’s Privy Church. According to Burrage, Browne was certainly not the first exhibiting congregational ideas. Still, he argues on the basis of Browne’s literature that he can indeed be considered the “first Englishman of strong intellectual gifts to win distinction as a preacher of separatism” and the “pioneer of modern Congregationalism”. Downplaying Anabaptist influence, Burrage follows Dexter in his analysis that Browne’s second period in Cambridge has been pivotal, though he would not yet conceive of Browne as a congregationalist, for there is no evidence “which would justify us in believing that at Cambridge he enunciated such Congregational principles as would be recognized as satisfactory by the Congregational churches of to-day.” Like Dexter he explains Browne’s separation due to his rejection of the ordaining authority of the bishop. Yet, Burrage does offer a more elaborate explanation of Browne’s ecclesiology in relation to ordained ministry. He discerns two stages: before and after his flight to the Netherlands. The first stage he sees pictured in the account given in *A True and Short Declaration*. While he praises Browne’s well developed view of organization in it, Burrage discerns some ambiguity concerning the role of the officers. He says, “the officers of this company as first fully organized, apparently were not styled pastor, teacher, elders, and deacons, as might have been supposed, but ‘teachers, guides & releueuers (i.e, leaders)” A second stage is unfolded in *A book which sheweth*, where Browne shows his ideal of a church in which the “people, not the officers, constitute the church.” Burrage summarizes Browne’s ecclesiology as follows:

A church is a single congregation which is under the immediate leadership of Christ and by his direct guidance is able in general to regulate its own affairs, though in especially important matters it may consult the opinion of other

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120 Burrage, *The Early English Dissenters*, 1: 95 n3.
congregations, or of a Synod composed of members—not necessarily elders—of many churches.122

As ‘a church’, members jointly appoint the most forward and wisest to be their elders. But while members also choose their officers, the elders ordain with the imposition of hands, though such imposition is not absolutely essential for Browne. Burrage also briefly notes Browne’s appreciation for a synodical structure. His two-stage interpretation of Browne’s developing ecclesiology however, seems nonetheless rather unlikely. For Browne’s autobiography was written only two years later than his extensive catechesis A Booke that sheweth, which appeared within a year of his arrival in Middelburg. A similar stress on Browne’s egalitarian ecclesiology was also expressed in Jacob de Hoop Scheffer’s posthumously published History of the Free Churchmen (1921), who concludes that Browne acquired his ecclesial agenda from Dutch Mennonites, since he advocated a free and independent church in which all people were equal in rank, and hierarchical distinction was regarded evil.123

Early historiography reveals a rather incomplete image of Robert Browne. As far as authors are concerned with his ecclesiology, all attention is focused on his ideas of voluntarism and the state.124 But even on these issues it barely goes beyond a short description of Browne’s basic convictions, let alone a thorough reflection. Consequently, both Puritanism and Continental Anabaptism are named as potential sources of inspiration. His ideas about ordained ministry are only referred to as anti-authoritarian and radically different from present ideas found in the English church (episcopal or presbyterian),125 but no attempt is made to understand its meaning within his broader covenantal ecclesiology. Rather, Browne is portrayed as an early precursor of modern democratic leadership.

1.5.2. ‘Calvinist’ Interpretations

A significant contribution to a better understanding of the theology of the English Separatists, including Robert Browne, was made by Baptist scholar Barrie R. White in his acclaimed The Separatist Tradition (1971). Although White explicitly denies Browne to have played a decisive role in the development of the Separatist tradition, he also designates him the “first significant writer on the side of Separatism.”126 White is the first who fully approaches Browne from his Cambridge Puritan context and denies the need

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122 Burrage, The Early English Dissenters, 1: 103.
123 See Jacob G. de Hoop Scheffer, History of the Free Churchmen, called the Brownists, Pilgrim Fathers and Baptists in the Dutch Republic 1581-1701 (Ithaca: Andrus & Church, 1921), 6-8.
125 This impression continued among some authors throughout the twentieth century, see for example Joyce Reason, Robert Browne (1550?-1633) (London: Independent Press, 1961), 9; and Routley, English Religious Dissent, 57-59.
to link Browne to Anabaptist theology in order to explain his ecclesiological ideas.\textsuperscript{127} Strangely enough, White is very cautious to make a reconstruction of Browne’s ecclesiology since he thinks it is difficult to establish Browne’s thoughts due to the polemical context in which they evolved. Additionally, he mentions Browne’s lack of experience in bringing his ideas to practice.\textsuperscript{128} Pertaining the question of ordained ministry, White comments that Browne “said remarkably little about the matter of authority within the covenanted community.”\textsuperscript{129}

Over against previous readers, White understands Browne’s ecclesiology as basically Calvinist: the covenantal relation between Christ in his three-fold office and the church, the pattern of ministerial offices, the rejection of episcopal ordination, the right of every particular congregation to elect officers, and lastly that the pastoral ministry consisted of word and sacrament.\textsuperscript{130} According to White, Browne diverted from Puritan thinking first by his conviction that obedience and discipline were essential to the covenant (a so-called ‘mutualist’ or conditional understanding), which gave him the push towards separation. Secondly, by his interpretation of the general priesthood as the shared responsibility to abstain and redress wickedness.\textsuperscript{131} And third, he diverted by his re-interpretation of Matthew 18:17, which Browne applied to the entire membership, rather than the elders only. Consequently, Browne saw the risen Christ as the first authority in the church, and then came the entire congregation, who left its practical exercise to more gifted and mature members. In this way, Browne explained ordination in terms of choice and appointment by the congregation.\textsuperscript{132} And, as White understands Browne, he regarded ministry non-essential to the nature of the church and limited to one church only. For a ministerial charge had no authority apart from the local covenant. Although White claims that Browne firmly subordinated the ministry to the covenanted community, he does make an explicit nuance: “In the Separatist tradition, as in the Genevan, the pastor seems always to be have been senior in gifts and, probably, in authority.”\textsuperscript{133}

Though B.R. White made a tremendous effort in portraying the developments among English Separatists, his description of Robert Browne did not remain undisputed. Only a year later the American scholar David Hall published \textit{A Faithful Shepherd} (1972), concerned primarily with seventeenth century Puritan ministry in New England. Yet, Hall also gives considerable attention to Robert Browne’s view of ordained ministry as he

\textsuperscript{127} See White, \textit{The English Separatist Tradition}, 33-43.
\textsuperscript{128} See White, \textit{The English Separatist Tradition}, 52.
\textsuperscript{129} White, \textit{The English Separatist Tradition}, 61.
\textsuperscript{130} See White, \textit{The English Separatist Tradition}, 46-55, 63-64
\textsuperscript{131} See White, \textit{The English Separatist Tradition}, 60.
\textsuperscript{132} See White, \textit{The English Separatist Tradition}, 60-64.
\textsuperscript{133} White, \textit{The English Separatist Tradition}, 63.
accredits Browne with a greater relevance than White sought to do. Hall persisted in White’s Calvinist perspective and puts Browne in the same camp of authors who aimed for a further reformation of church and ministry, “to ensure that God’s ambassadors were a competent, professionalized elite.” Hall furthermore explains the congregational feature, the church as a gathering of free people, from Calvin’s practice of placing the responsibility of ministerial election in the hands of the membership. Consequently, Hall comments that “Puritans were often able to establish a de facto congregationalism, electing their minister to office as through this act were the basis of his call.” So for Hall, Browne’s path did not differ much from Puritanism with regard to the internal polity, but only in his conviction that it was necessary to detach from the bishop. Browne understood the doctrine of the common priesthood as the liberty to seek salvation, free from church hierarchy. Browne furthermore diverted from the existent Calvinist ministerial pattern in his denial of idea of a ‘set apart’ ministry by “eliminating the elaborate procedures used within the Reformation tradition to uphold the independence of the office.” The basis of the call to ministerial office came from the covenanted congregation. Another difference is Browne’s supposed acceptance of the ordination of (non-educated) laymen. Despite these minor differences, however, Hall interprets Robert Browne’s ecclesiological ideas in continuity with Thomas Cartwright’s Presbyterianism. Especially for their anti-sacerdotal bias and congregational understanding of church and ministry. Though Browne deprived the ministry of its status as an independent order, he retained a firm notion that ministry originates in Christ’s call.

Subsequent publications generally continued Hall’s pattern, be it with different emphases. Michael Watts, in the first volume of his monumental *The Dissenters* (1978), concludes from Browne’s idea of a voluntary covenant that every member shared in the threefold office of Christ. He maintains that the relation between congregation and ordained ministry could be explained as a second covenant based upon mutual agreement, the minister having the right of submission of the congregation, and the congregation the right of guidance by the minister. Watts too, underscores that officers received their authority and office from God, but are called by the highest level of consent by the church. Also Timothy George, who in his dissertation *John Robinson and the English Separatist Tradition* (1982) briefly discusses Browne’s thought, acknowledges his

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formative ecclesiology for later Separatists, especially for his inventive framing of the church in a covenantal relationship, the voluntary church and the unforced conscience. Our overview of the publications, written mainly in the 1970’s, witnesses a significant turn in the interpretation of Browne’s ecclesiological convictions and affiliations in comparison to the beginning of the twentieth century. He is suddenly placed within the ‘Calvinistic’ spectrum. Though it is also evident that questions still remain with regard to the extent of this affiliation and particularly the significance of the ordained ministry within his ecclesiology.

1.5.3. Peter Lake’s ‘Populist Revolt’

The year 1982 saw a return to more populist interpretations of Browne’s ecclesiology. Influential is especially Peter Lake’s Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church (1982), we mentioned earlier (§ 1.2.). It is primarily an attempt to redeem Elizabethan Puritanism of its image as an oppositionist force, set earlier by Patrick Collinson, by calling attention for its more constructive side. Lake argues that the aforementioned Thomas Cartwright, leader of the Presbyterian party, should be placed within the moderate camp of Puritanism. A position, he says, Cartwright even ‘invented’, as he tried to hold middle ground between popish remains and puritan subversion. Separatism is subsequently portrayed as “the unacceptable face of puritan radicalism, the logical extension of puritan and presbyterian positions.” While never denying a certain link between the Presbyterians and Separatists, Lake, in the end, follows Cartwright’s criticism toward the Separatists for their lack of sufficient ministry and sufficient scholarship. In this context he makes his, now notorious, claim: “Hence, in rejecting the separatists’ populist revolt against any sort of ministerial elite Cartwright was defending the world-view of interests of those very university intellectuals whose aspirations were so clearly reflected in the classis movement and of whom Cartwright himself was so outstanding an example.” So doing, Lake distanced Presbyterians and Separatists on the issue of church ministry, under the pretension that Separatists opposed the recognition of a learned ministry. Suddenly Robert Browne headed a popular religious resistance movement, and thus must be viewed separately from the Presbyterians.

In the same line, three more publications followed. First in 1984 from the hand of Calvin Augustine Pater, who traced the ideas of the English Separatists back to the

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139 See Timothy George, John Robinson and the Separatist Tradition (NABPR dissertation series, vol. 1; Macon: Mercer University, 1982), 33-35, 40-44.
141 See Lake, Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church, 7.
142 See Lake, Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church, 77-78.
143 See Lake, Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church, 88-89.
144 Lake, Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church, 89.
radical line of reformation coming from Andreas Karlstadt, Luther’s former colleague at Wittenberg. Pater describes Browne, as an advocate of “democratic church government whereas Barrow clung to the Calvinist pattern.”145 Second, the social-historian David Zaret, who in his A Heavenly Contract (1985) explains Browne’s thought from a strict egalitarian point of view. In his study of organizational and ideological developments among Puritans and Separatists, he describes Browne’s covenantal ecclesiology as a theological response to the upcoming involvement of the laity, to channel the increased lay initiative who no longer uncritically accepted clerical authority.146 Zaret reasserts a firm categorical distinction between Puritans and Separatists, on the basis of having “diametrically opposed priorities on organization.”147 Based on the assumption that congregational consent with the election of ministers was an exclusive ‘Separatist remedy’, he argues that the reforms desired by Browne point to “a far more democratic organization of church life than was possible in the Church of England.”148 For his alternative to episcopal ordination was the congregational control of clergy, thereby turning the ideal of the priesthood of believers into reality. Zaret finally comments that the Separatists, implying notably Browne, questioned the Puritan emphasis on preaching as central element of ordained ministry, because they “regarded its practice as a way of diverting attention away from the corruptions in the church.”149

The third publication worth mentioning is an article by the hand of Diane Parkin-Speer in 1987, discussing Browne’s reception of classical rhetoric and Ramist logic in his A Treatise upon the 23. of Matthewe (1582).150 She concludes, in the same tenor as the authors above, that Browne: “was a thoroughgoing intellectual and theological iconoclast,” who denounced a university education in the tradition of early revolutionary Anabaptism.151 Parkin-Speer’s article further confirms that the years following Lake’s publication represent a turn in the interpretation of Browne’s position and theology. Different from the ‘Calvinist’ perspective, these publications accentuate his uncompromising radicalism and describe his ideas and movement entirely from the angle of a popular lay-movement and anti-establishment. Given the explicit reference to

148 Zaret, The Heavenly Contract, 107-108. While he does not write much about Browne’s church polity, Alan Sell more or less seems to have a similar impression of his ecclesiology. See his Saints, 14.
‘democracy’ to denote Browne’s views there is a clear connection with the previous interpretation of Dexter, with the difference that Browne’s literature is now mainly interpreted from a more sociological viewpoint drawing attention to his subversive character and ideas.

1.5.4. Brachlow’s Rejoinder

Only a year later, the most significant study of radical Puritan and Separatist ecclesiology appeared from the hand of Stephen Brachlow, nota bene a student of White. In the publication of his dissertation, The Communion of the Saints (1988), he offers a reinterpretation of ecclesiological developments among English Separatists in relation to non-separating Puritan congregationalists. Brachlow joins White and Hall in their interpretation of Browne as a child of radical Puritanism. Even stronger than White did before, Brachlow nuances the distinction between Browne and non-separating radical Puritans, rather underscoring the continuity of ideas in matters of ecclesiology, noting “the ‘congregational’ drift apparent in the literature of Elizabethan left-wing puritan propagandists.”152 Firmly taking a stance against Peter Lake’s one-sided description of separatism as a ‘populist revolt’, he shows a significant continuity between Browne’s conditional or ‘mutualist’ view of the covenant and the Calvinistic theology of Puritanism.153 A second similarity is the recognition of “three centres of power with Christ as monarchical head, the officers exercising an aristocratic rule, and the people democratically possessing the power of governance.”154 Brachlow firmly denies English Separatism to be a popular revolt, precisely since it maintained an executive role for the ordained ministry. Brachlow also critiques White for his condescending idea of Browne’s understanding of ministerial authority, which Browne developed “far more precisely” than White has given him credit for.155 Ordained ministry is by Browne explained as a provision from God and should therefore be yielded to and be followed. Browne’s emphasis on eldership, however, does coincide with “a strong democratic strain,”156 since the membership shared in the threefold office of Christ, upholding participation and accountability. While Brachlow affirms a certain ambivalence about the nature of ministerial authority,157 he maintains that Separatists had a concept of a separated ministerial order. He furthermore nuances the position of Hall, by stating that the approval of lay ordination was perceived highly unusual. Furthermore, Brachlow notes that Browne “appears to have conceded to synods more authority over particular

153 See Brachlow, The Communion of the Saints, 8, 47-51.
154 Brachlow, The Communion of the Saints, 175.
155 Brachlow, The Communion of the Saints, 175.
156 Brachlow, The Communion of the Saints, 175.
churches than other spokesmen within the tradition.”158 Especially since Browne saw the need of a synodical assembly, Brachlow concludes that separatists “were hardly more democratically inclined than their left-wing puritan counterparts.”159

A mild correction of Brachlow’s views came from the Dutch scholar Steven Paas in 1996, who wrote his dissertation about the relation between church authority and power in the writings of radical Puritans and the Separatists, headed by a Dutch translation of the title of Brachlow’s study. Though his findings never really reached beyond the Dutch borders, his research is worth mentioning, for it shows a rather nuanced picture of Browne’s position in relation to the English Presbyterians. Paas reaffirms, stronger than Brachlow did before, also the differences between Browne and the Presbyterians. For Paas, Browne’s ecclesiology hangs together with, and can (almost) be identified with, the church covenant.160 He subsequently discerns two elements, first the congregation’s relation to God, and second the means by which God rules the church, namely order and discipline. According to Paas, Browne avoids both extremes of ministerial office as independent authority or as a representative of the will of the people.161 The congregation is involved in order and discipline, but is simultaneously obedient to its ministerial officers, as expressed in the church covenant, in which both human and divine aspects play a part. A characteristic which Paas, like Brachlow earlier, already observes in the wider Puritan movement.162 Paas also criticizes White for making the unjust claim that Browne prioritized the human aspect over the divine, and human effort over grace. Rather, it seems that Browne’s “soteriology and ecclesiology do not go together.”163 This ambivalence in Browne’s thoughts leads Paas to deny White’s claim that Browne was the first Separatist to have developed a “consistent doctrine of the church.”164 Paas rather thinks that Browne stressed the corporate over the individual. Even so, concludes Paas, Browne viewed ministers functioning below the congregation, since they were chosen by consent of the people.

The studies of Brachlow and Paas have made a tremendous contribution to a better understanding of Robert Browne’s covenantal ecclesiology. Especially Brachlow’s work is still a main source for English Separatist ecclesiology. Even stronger than White, his interpretation pleads for a close association with leftwing Puritans, correcting the previous ‘Anabaptist’ classification. Still, questions persist with regard to Browne’s concept of ordained ministry and authority in relation divine calling and human consent.

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161 Paas, *De gemeenschap der heiligen*, 121.
162 Paas, *De gemeenschap der heiligen*, 123.
163 “Geloofsleer en kerkleer stemmen niet overeen.” Paas, *De gemeenschap der heiligen*, 125.
164 Paas, *De gemeenschap der heiligen*, 125.
1.5.5. Recent Studies

In first decades of the twenty-first century a diversity of interpretations can be observed. For example Jason K. Lee, who published a dissertation concerning the theology of John Smyth in 2003. In his analysis he draws heavily upon a presumed similarity to Robert Browne’s earlier ideas.\textsuperscript{165} Lee emphasizes the formative influence of the Cambridge Presbyterians that convinced Browne of the authority of the entire church and that groups could handle decisions better than a single person: “The elders were to provide leadership for the church, which was the seat of authority.”\textsuperscript{166}

A second publication of importance was contributed by the historian Peter Iver Kaufman, who wrote a book about the development of popular Protestantism in England called *Thinking of the Laity in Later Tudor England* (2004). In his description of the moderate Puritan attempt to “buttress the arguments for lay authority and local control,” he portrays Robert Browne—yet in close relation to the non-separatist Dudley Fenner—as the radical opponent of episcopal hierarchy in a reformed church and a proponent of “a democratizing reform.”\textsuperscript{167} In its place, Browne would like to see a greater power for each parishioner. Though, Kaufman denies Browne to support pure democracy, he specifically understands Browne to be disappointed in the present state of poorly educated ministers. Yet, Kaufman does observe that Browne gave a significant freedom for lay involvement in ministerial activities, bringing the Puritan practice of prophesying a step further through his covenantal understanding of the church. Kaufman comments: “Arguably, the covenant replaced the clergy, in some measure.”\textsuperscript{168} He goes on by stating that it is impossible to determine how Browne saw the power distributed to entire membership, only out of resentment with conformist colleagues, or because of his favor of “leveling and lay empowerment.”\textsuperscript{169} While, Kaufman’s preference leans to the first, he does note that Browne “never comprehensively commented on the relationships between ‘the whole’ congregation and its ‘forwardest’ members.

Another study came from Nick Bunker, who published an extensive enquiry of the Pilgrim Fathers in 2010, *Making Haste From Babylon*, notably featuring Robert Browne as a crucial figure providing the theological ground for the course of New England theology. Bunker resents the habitually negligence with whom historians pushed Browne aside in their studies, “pretending that his infuriating, volatile character had little direct influence on the Pilgrims. It is time Browne came in from the cold, and

\textsuperscript{165} I earlier commented on this unwarranted presumption in Jan Martijn Abrahamse, “‘Is Smyth also Among the Brownists?’ A Confrontation Between John Smyth and his Predecessor Robert Browne,” BQ 46, no. 3 (2015): 103-112.
\textsuperscript{167} Peter Iver Kaufman, *Thinking of the Laity in Late Tudor England* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2004), 129-140.
\textsuperscript{168} Kaufman, *Thinking of the Laity in Late Tudor England*, 149.
\textsuperscript{169} Kaufman, *Thinking of the Laity in Late Tudor England*, 149.
with him the concealed history of Pilgrim origins.” Though Bunker is able to recreate Browne’s historical context with precision, locating him within the Cambridge Puritan movement, the estimation of Browne’s ecclesiology lags behind. Bunker repeats, more or less, Lee and Kaufman’s words: “It seems that it was loosely based on the prophesying that the Queen had vetoed, but it lacked a rigid format, and they had no presiding clergymen.”

In 2011 the Australian historian Stephen Chavura wrote a book about Tudor political theory, entitled Tudor Protestant Political Thought. It includes a significant section about Browne’s contribution to the debate about political thought in sixteenth century England. Chavura writes about Robert Browne and future Separatist Henry Barrow jointly, that they “considered themselves to have little in common with Puritans such as Thomas Cartwright and Walter Travers.” He mistakenly founds his strict use of different categories for Puritans and Separatists on the work of Stephen Brachlow. Subsequently, Chavura explains the Elizabethan period, notably including the Separatists, as a turning point in the history of English thought, for “[t]he Separatists attempted to break down spiritual hierarchies between clerics and laypeople, and also the hierarchy among clergics themselves.” These two objects, however, are mixed up in Chavura’s explanation, as if the opposition to ministerial hierarchy also includes the abolishment of the differences between clergy and laity. Yet, he concludes that this “radical sense of equality” was a characteristic of the Separatist movement. Though he admits that Calvin himself already defended congregational consent, it was Browne who discovered its democratic potential. Though recognizing continuity of thought between Browne and the English Presbyterians, such as Cartwright, specifically about the concept of congregational consent and ordained ministry, he leaves Peter Lake’s depiction of Browne’s views, as a “populist revolt against any sort of ministerial elite,” undisputed. Still, Chavura cannot deny that Browne also recognized the divine origin of ministerial authority. Yet, he finds, “[p]recisely what Browne meant by this is unclear, but he may have intended his democratic conditions to stand in apposition to the divine

170 Bunker, Making Haste From Babylon, 67.
171 Bunker, Making Haste From Babylon, 85.
173 Chavura, Tudor Protestant Political Thought, 35. It seems that Chavura too quickly took over Brachlow’s observation, “it has been widely assumed that separatists deserve a category all their own” (The Communion of the Saints, 9), as a statement of his own. However, Brachlow’s entire purpose was rather to show “the continuity of ideas” and “fluid” demarcations (The Communion of the Saints, 268).
174 Chavura, Tudor Protestant Political Thought, 71.
175 Chavura, Tudor Protestant Political Thought, 72.
176 Chavura, Tudor Protestant Political Thought, 177.
177 See Chavura, Tudor Protestant Political Thought, 200-201.
178 See Chavura, Tudor Protestant Political Thought, 187, 206.
179 Chavura, Tudor Protestant Political Thought, 201.
will condition, that is, God has ordained if the people have consented.”180 In other words, the people’s election functioned as a heuristic instrument to discern the will of God. Chavura does make a nuance, by stating that Browne did not advocate a direct election of ministers by the congregation, but that democratically elected presbyters subsequently elected the ministry, awaiting only the approval of the congregation. As such, Chavura unknowingly follows the position taken earlier by Paas as he writes: “Separatists wanted to avoid both tyranny from above and tyranny from below.”181

And finally, in a study of New England republicanism of 2012, Michael Winship dedicates a few pages to Robert Browne, whom he describes as the first author to demarcate the barriers between Presbyterians and Separatists.182 Though he understands Browne to have adopted a presbyterian model to structure his Separatist church order, Browne diverged from the Presbyterians on the notion of the role and significance of ordained ministry: “On the contrary, every Christian had a divine mandate to preach and edify.”183 Consequently, where in the presbyterian model the elders governed and taught with the consent of the people, Browne is said to have envisioned the people to be actively involved in the governance and teaching of the church. As such, Winship explicitly understands Browne as a great advocate of lay participation and inventor of the elevation of the laity. Ministers could even be ordained by lay members. Winship concludes, “what Browne was envisioning was closer to a democracy, where the people governed directly.”184

The publications of the last decade reveal a rather diverse image of Browne’s ecclesiological convictions, including the role of ordained ministry, in which previous notions more or less find repetition. On the one hand there is a historical connection with Cambridge Presbyterianism, on the other hand there is the pertinent association with democracy that continues to determine the reading of his covenantal ecclesiology.

1.5.6. Remaining Questions
On the basis of the overview above, several lacunae can be determined. B.R. White may claim that Browne had his “fair share of attention,”185 yet many questions remain unanswered. Especially with regard to Browne’s idea of church-state relations, his use of the concept of the church covenant, and his particular covenantal view of ordained ministry. It strengthens Paul Fiddes’ call for more research regarding Browne’s covenantal ecclesiology.186 A thorough investigation of Browne’s theology of ordained

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185 White, *The English Separatist Tradition*, 44.
186 See Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces*, 32.
ministry might lead to more clarity concerning Browne’s relationship to Presbyterians, specifically Thomas Cartwright and Richard Greenham. Subsequently, there is the persistent image of Browne as a revolutionary leader of an anticlerical uprising as Peter Lake would make us believe. But, what then exactly is anticlericalism? T.H.L. Parker correctly returns the question asking for specification: “Is it against a separate order of clerics, against a certain kind of clerics, or against clerics in general?” In other words, how far reaching are the modifications made by Browne to the existing Presbyterian teaching? This study is therefore concerned with some remaining questions. First, while a majority of scholars locate Browne’s ideology, more or less, within the context of Cambridge Puritanism, there is significant disagreement about the extent of this affiliation. Hence, the question: how does Browne theologically relate to the Cambridge Puritans, especially the Presbyterians? And second, since secondary literature contains rather contradictory interpretations of Browne’s ecclesiology these diverse readings impose the question: how does Browne envision the distribution of ministerial authority in his covenantal ecclesiology? Some explain his ideas as a form of ecclesiastical democracy in which every member has a voice, others as comparable with the presbyterian model in which ministerial authority is mainly in the hands of pastors, elders and synods. Both these questions need to be answered in order to provide an adequate formulation of Browne’s concept of ordained ministry.

1.6. Ordained Ministry: Areas of Controversy

In order to retrieve Browne’s contribution for the church today, it is necessary to develop criteria that will enable us to determine the conditions which a constructive proposal must meet in order to be found credible. In this paragraph we will therefore explore three points of conflict that together render an ordained ministry controversial among Baptists, as within the broader Free Church tradition. By formulating my criteria on the basis of the reasons for disagreement, I hope to come to a theology of ordained ministry which is not only acceptable for those who already acknowledge its value, but also those who take a more critical stance. First the precarious clergy-laity divide through the work of the leading Baptist scholar James William McClendon. His objections serve as a representative lens to sharpen our view of the contemporary controversy with regard to the recognition of a distinct ‘ordained ministry’ (§ 1.6.1.). McClendon is chosen as representative of the contemporary concern for the priestly vocation of the whole church, which in his view calls for the abolition of the laity. A call in which he largely relies on the text of Ephesians 4:11. Behind McClendon’s major concern for the priestly ministry of

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188 Kärkkäinen presents McClendon as the leading ecclesiologist of Baptist ecclesiology, see his An Introduction to Ecclesiology, 142-150.
the whole church two other elements conflate: first his identification of ordination with a transition to higher spiritual status and authority, and second his egalitarian view of ministerial giftedness and the presumption of ministerial exclusivity for those in office. These two points will therefore be discussed at further length. First, the problematic coupling of ministerial authority with an external ritual, such as ordination, is described notably by Charles Spurgeon. Even though, as noted, ordination was still commonly practiced among seventeenth century Baptists, the obviousness of this practice somehow changed in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. To get a better grip on what changed, a discussion is presented of the increasing difficulty with ordination among some eighteenth and nineteenth century writers, and especially Spurgeon, whose vehement rejection of the ordination rite—though over a century ago—still returns frequently in today’s debate (§ 1.6.2.). His voice is selected as a vivid illustration of the difficulty within the Free Church tradition toward established forms of authority and authorization by an outward ritual. Then, we will further discuss the problem of ministerial exclusivity through the work of the Croatian theologian Miroslav Volf, as presented in his groundbreaking and influential book After Our Likeness (1998). From Pentecostal origin, his contribution also represents the emergence of charismatic theology that considerably transformed the discussion of ministry in the wider ecumenical conversation. Volf considers a separated ministry by ordination in contradiction with the egalitarian character of congregational ecclesiology that should foster an ‘every member ministry’ structure (§ 1.6.3.). The idea of this paragraph is to get a better insight in the opposition toward ordained ministry within the Free Church tradition, and provide parameters for our intended retrieval of Browne’s theology as basis for a constructive theology of ordained ministry. Other critics could have been chosen, yet these different voices together provide a good overview of the existing issues with ordained ministry, and especially what is at stake in our search for a constructive congregational theology of ordained ministry. After all, the kernel of these criticisms will help us to uncover the precise nature of today’s controversy, and hence to seek new ways in which ordained ministry can be appreciated.

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189 This is the English version of Volf’s Habilitationschrift published earlier as Trinität und Gemeinschaft: Eine ökumenische Ekklesiologie (Mainz/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag/Neukirchener Verlag, 1996). Volf’s Trinitarian ecclesiology forms an important resource in recent ecclesiological publications, see for instance Nigel Wright Free Church, Free State, xxiv, 4-6, esp. 116-119; Andy Lord, Network Church: A Pentecostal Ecclesiology Shaped by Mission (GPCS, vol. 11; Leiden: Brill, 2012), esp. 69-70; Van de Beek, Lichaam en Geest, esp. 32-37; Freeman, Contesting Catholicity, 243-248; and also Leene, Trinititeit, antropologie en ecclesiologie, 215-251. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, in his introductory work, presents Volf as the foremost representative of free church ecclesiology, see his An Introduction to Ecclesiology, 134; cf. Graham Hill, Salt, Light, and a City: Introducing Missional Ecclesiology (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2012), esp. 134-146.
1.6.1. The Clergy-Laity Divide

James McClendon (1924-2000) is by many considered a leading Baptist theologian of the twentieth century, whose legacy goes well beyond his own ‘baptist’ community. It is significant to notice that, though he is often regarded as the ‘theological father’ of today’s sacramental resurgence among Baptist scholars, McClendon himself firmly objected to an ordained ministry. These objections can be found dispersed throughout his celebrated second volume of his three-piece systematic theology, *Doctrine* (1994), in which McClendon developed his ‘baptist vision’ for ecclesiology.

His first protest toward ordained ministry is its devastating effect upon the idea of communal discernment (cf. Matt. 18:15-20; Acts 15). Under the header ‘Soaring’, he explains the reasons for the loss of the Christian practice of common responsibility down the ages (a ‘devolution’). Where in the earliest church discipline was a communal practice under the guidance of Spirit in which every Christian had his or her responsibility, it ended up as a prerogative of a separated officeholder. In the ‘small print’ McClendon praises the Anabaptist tradition for their retrieval this practice of communal discernment. It seems that for McClendon, the recognition of an ordained ministry essentially means a deprivation of the church’s common ministry, which is bound to prevent the church from functioning as church. Furthermore, McClendon observes a shift in focus of church discipline. Where in the earliest churches the emphasis was placed

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191 Cf. “Clearly, however, McClendon is not undertaking either a Wesleyan or Pentecostal theology, but a baptist theology. Yet his is not a parochial baptist theology, but an ecumenical one.” Amos Yong, “The ‘Baptist Vision’ of James Wm. McClendon, Jr.: A Wesleyan-Pentecostal Response,” *WT* 37, no. 2 (2002): 46.

192 Prominent Baptist theologians who direct their reorientation upon sacramental theology to the influence of McClendon are Steve Harmon (see his *Towards Baptist Catholicity*, 6) and Curtis Freeman (see his “‘To Feed Upon by Faith: Nourishment from the Lord’s Table,” in *Baptist Sacramentalism*, 209-210). The latter, however, recently nuanced his opinion about McClendon’s supposedly sacramental view (see *Contesting Catholicity*, 372). For an extensive analyses see Bullard, “James William McClendon Jr.,” 267-288.


195 McClendon, *Doctrine*, 143.
on the development of holiness, later discipline orientated itself on the correction of errors. In others words, he observes a shift from character formation to the conformation of outward behavior. McClendon compliments the Wesleyan tradition and Pentecostal movement for retrieving the importance of holiness. It is within this context that McClendon also mentions that the practice of ordination is a remaining ‘hint’ which still demonstrates some awareness of the need for spiritual growth expected of every Christian. McClendon, however, regrets its selective application as “partial recognition of distinctive vocations,” by which the ministry of the whole Christian community is neglected.196

A second objection is the corruption of the priestly role of the whole church and hence the ministry of every member. McClendon’s roots his broader treatment of the church, following the example of John Howard Yoder, firmly within the communitarian approach of Judaism and the legacy of the Radical Reformation.197 The church is about “Christian life together.”198 He therefore categorically distinguishes his “free church or believers church” approach from Protestant and Catholic ecclesiologies.199 Within the broader circle of Israel, local Christian assemblies may share under God’s rule through the presence of the risen Christ, and the fellowship of the Spirit.200 These three make up the basic continuities regarding the New Testament’s ecclesiology, setting the scene for first a disciple church which seeks God’s rule, takes up discipleship after Christ and receives the Spirit, and secondly a servant leadership “that says No to social control.”201 The problem of a hierarchical or sacral form of ministry is that it seeks control of the membership through the sacraments and a priestly form of leadership, and thus lacks Christlike leadership that enables the church to be ‘church’, which is “to serve as a priest-people.”202 A concept McClendon takes to have been lost in the post-apostolic age when an unscriptural distinction emerged between laity and clergy. The only way to return to Biblical character of the church is the radical abolition of the laity, once sought by the Radical Reformation, and the reinstitution of the entire membership in its priestly role.203

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196 McClendon, Doctrine, 144.
198 McClendon, Doctrine, 361. Cf. “One of church history’s perverse omissions is a due analysis of the role of the sixteenth century baptists, the so-called ana-baptists, many of whom from the 1520s on managed to combine radical biblicism with radical communitarianism, producing an authentic community of discipleship. I believe that is a worthy goal for us today.” James Wm. McClendon, Jr. “The Concept of Authority: A Baptist View,” PRSt 16, no. 2 (1989): 103.
199 McClendon, Doctrine, 361-362, 365.
200 McClendon, Doctrine, 365-367.
201 McClendon, Doctrine, 367.
202 McClendon, Doctrine, 368.
203 “Here, then, is a place with room for radical reformation in the church. To accomplish it, rather than once again skewering that rather shabby American professional class, ‘the clergy,’ the approach must be radical abolition of ‘the laity.’ Here ‘laity’ is not with the New Testament a people of God, but a passive, second-rank Christian class, rated below even the ‘clergy.’” McClendon, Doctrine, 369.
The abolition of the laity would restore the lost ideas of discipleship and communal discernment to the center of the church. Under specific reference to Ephesians 4:7-13, McClendon calls for the awareness of every member’s spiritual gifts, as he finds illustrated by the apostle Paul:

The Pauline vision, in other words, is that the church to be the church must not be a company of privates led by ordained captains but a company of equals, equally gifted by God’s Spirit, equally responsible for the community-building whose accomplishment is the fullness of Christ. Here, then, is the challenge of radical reformation ministry: not a set-apart ministry of those who work for God while others work for themselves, and not a flock of secular ‘callings’ (doctor, lawyer, merchant, chief) tended by a shepherd with a religious calling (priest, preacher, pope, or pastor), but a people set apart, earning their daily bread in honest toil, to be sure, but living to become for others the bread of life.204

The ministerial concept of Ephesians 4 convinces McClendon to argue for baptism as the only “commissioning for this ministry,” and concludes, “[e]very member is a minister.”205 Though he, somewhat ambivalently, still allows for local apostles, evangelists, bishops and elders, they are all laymen, or else every Christian is a cleric.

McClendon’s third objection to ordained ministry is formulated in a chapter on authority.206 He argues that the recognition of ordained ministry implicitly assumes the existence of a form of authority independent from the community. As an alternative McClendon joins the idea of an embedded type of authority, the ‘critical authority’, to be besides the forms of authority: either derived from a special office (authority ‘in’) or specific training (authority ‘on’).207 Like religious experience and Scripture, also the authority of the church cannot be understood independently from Christ. Only God can be an ultimate authority, and all else is subordinated.208 It is the community of the church which, through its experience of the presence of Christ, the experience of the Spirit, and the written Scripture, bears a proximate authority.209 Therefore, argues McClendon, no individual believer, nor clergy or a priestly summit can be a final authority, but ecclesial authority always requires the communal discernment of the whole church.210 For McClendon the strength in congregational polity is not a majority vote, but mutual trust

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205 McClendon, Doctrine, 369-370. McClendon mentions his debt towards Martin Luther, who expressed the priesthood of every believer on the basis of baptism.
206 McClendon, Doctrine, 454–488.
207 McClendon, Doctrine, 457–458.
208 McClendon, Doctrine, 458. 477, 481–482.
210 McClendon, Doctrine, 478–479.
and obedience to the Spirit. Having already pointed toward the authoritative role of preaching as a “remembering sign,” he cannot but recognize “a second kind of legitimate proximate authority” residing with the servant offices, they need to exercise their power with restraint. McClendon is very clear in what brings someone in this place of authority: “the preacher’s call to preach” affirmed by the congregation on the basis of his or her life’s story. More importantly, according to McClendon, is the third kind of ecclesial authority, the authority of every member to acknowledge the preached Word in the lives they live. It is unfortunate, however, that McClendon does not explain how these different forms of authority relate.

The main of McClendon’s critique is concerned with the unbiblical suppressing effect of ordained ministry with regard to the collective role and authority of the entire congregation. To McClendon the recognition of an ‘ordained ministry’ is a direct threat to the church’s ministry to be a missionary people in the world. As such, the recognition of a separated ministry by ordination essentially prevents the church from ‘being church’. In the background of his argument lies the assumption that with the rise of a hierarchical church and the differentiation of the church in two classes, laity and clergy, the church lost sight of discipline, holiness, every member ministry, and most of all, communal discernment. With regard to our purpose, the following criterion can be derived: if a theology of ordained ministry is to be acknowledged, it should serve the communal existence of the church as a priestly people in the world.

McClendon’s difficulty with ordained ministry gives an apt idea of modern day’s preoccupation with the idea of equality, in which spiritual differentiation and ministerial privileges are watched with suspicion. Consequently, ordination is directly associated with spiritual elitism and sacramental hierarchy. A sacramental interpretation of ordination is considered as a direct assault on the egalitarian character of congregational ecclesiology, which is theologically validated by the notion of the general priesthood. This changing attitude toward the practice of ordination itself, from an accepted practice to an ‘unbiblical clerical consecration’, arose especially among English Baptists in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, partly in reaction to revival of the ‘high church’ teaching in the Anglican church. There the resistance against a clerical elite grew strong. A closer look at these developments will help find a further criterion for the evaluation of ordained ministry today.

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211 McClendon, Doctrine, 374-399. In this section McClendon’s describes preaching as a prophetic event, whereby not the words of the preacher matters, “what matters is that here God speaks” (398). A preacher preaches “so that Christ speaks his word, his Word, in her today” (399).

212 McClendon, Doctrine, 480.

213 McClendon, Doctrine, 399-400.

1.6.2. Ordination as Outward Ritualism

In the second half of the eighteenth century a growing number of Baptist ministers came to resist the practice of ordination. John Gill (1697-1771), a preeminent London preacher and theologian, was the first Baptist to write a complete systematic theology, *The Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity* (1769/1770). As such he influenced an entire generation of Baptist and other dissenting ministers. In this elaborate doctrinal work he expresses his favor for a visible church of regenerate members, who enter the church by covenanting with one another and with the Lord. Gill explicitly expresses his preference for the right of every church to ordain its own ministers, what he considers a ‘congregational’ ecclesiology. The installation to ministerial office should be done by congregational election, which is understood as the external calling of those who have experienced an inward calling. To Gill, ‘ordination’ coincides with this congregational election. However, this process should not be joined by any ordination rite, since it lacks any Biblical warranty. Gill writes,

> The hands of ministers being now empty, they have no gifts to convey through the use of this rite. To say that this rite is now used at the ordination of a pastor to point him out to the assembly, is exceeding trifling, and is a piece of weakness for which no excuse can be made.

The core of Gill’s objection toward ordination is the presumed meaninglessness of the visible and physical rite. Nothing happens and, importantly, nothing more needs to happen, for the candidate is already elected. Gill’s heavy complaint against the ordination-rite becomes all the more ‘trifling’ when taken into account that he himself was ordained. Conversely, anti-sacramental convictions did not always automatically

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216 For the text of the covenant of Gill’s congregation, see Timothy George, “The Ecclesiology of John Gill,” in *The Life and Thought of John Gill*, 230-231.
217 “But a particular visible gospel church is congregational. A church of saints thus essentially constituted, as to matter and form, have a power in this state to admit and reject members, as all societies have; and also to choose their own officers; which when done, they become a complete organized church, as to order and power.” John Gill, *Gill’s Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity: Being a System of Evangelical Truths deduced from the Sacred Scriptures* (Philadelphia: Dellaplain and Hellings, 1769/1770, 1810), 519.
219 “Election and ordination are spoken of as the same.” Gill, *Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, 525.
lead to a disavowal of the practice of ordination. John Sutcliff (1752-1814), for example, grounded his positive appreciation upon the apostolic mandate he found in the book of Acts and 1 Timothy (Acts 6:6; 13:3; 1 Tim. 5:22). Still, during an ordination service on June 23rd 1802 he did not refrain from making an important caveat in his ‘introductory address’ which resounds Gill’s earlier criticism: “Not that by this we can convey any ‘extraordinary’ gifts, or additional qualifications to the person ordained, fitting him for the work upon which he is entering. No; Our hands are empty.” Freed from any inkling of sacramental significance, Sutcliff felt it necessary to continue this solemn and significant rite, to mark the ‘setting apart’ of a specific person to the ministerial office. Similar wording appear in a tract written in 1874 by Charles Haddon Spurgeon under the sharp header “Fragments of Popery among Nonconformists.” In his acid criticism, he equals ordination completely with apostolic succession bringing about a change in spiritual status:

*Whence comes the whole paraphernalia of ordination as observed among some Dissenters?* Since there is no special gift to bestowed, why in any case the laying on of empty hands? Since we cannot pretend that mystic succession so vaunted by Ritualists, why are men styled ‘regularly ordained ministers’? A man who has preached for years is Mr. Brown, but after his ordination or recognition he develops into the Rev. Mr. Brown; what important change has he undergone?

Spurgeon clearly took the existent rejection of sacramental interpretations of ordination to its logical conclusion. And so he himself refused to be ordained when he was called to North Park Street Chapel in 1854 at the early age of 19. In a letter he elaborated on his position, offering a threefold argument: first, because ordination would imply apostolic succession as the ‘Tractarians’ maintained; second, since ordination would contradict with the autonomy of the local church, probably since the rite of ordination was customary performed by other ordained ministers and not by the congregation itself; and third, since the laying on of hands becomes meaningless without its sacramental significance.

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223 For John Sutcliff, see Michael A. G. Haykin, “‘A Habitation of God, Through the Spirit’: John Sutcliff (1752-1814) and the revitalization of the Calvinistic Baptists in the late eighteenth century,” *BQ* 34, no. 7 (1992): 304-319.  
224 John Sutcliff, “Introductory Address,” in *The Difficulties of the Christian Ministry, and the Means of surmounting them; with the Obedience of Churches to their Pastors explained and enforced* (Birmingham: J. Belcher, 1802), 7. I have to thank Dr. Curtis Freeman for this reference.  
of the antipathy toward ordination among Baptists. And so, his observation still stands: if ordination does not involve any special gift—a possibility which he disbanded as a "hangover from Romish sacramentalism"—it is an empty ritual, and thus, without significance. Under the surface of Spurgeon’s criticism lies the same assumption we found with McClendon, namely that the practice of ordination per definition implies to create a special category of Christians to be distinguished from the average laymen as advocated by the Oxford Movement (or "Tractarians"). Accordingly, Spurgeon concluded that ordination represented an institutionalized form of ‘authorization’ that in practice sidelined a minister’s moral life and undermined the autonomy of the local church. Something which in Spurgeon’s eyes directly conflicted with the testimony of Scripture and the nonconformist tradition. The same tradition also McClendon seeks to recover.

Over against the Tractarians’ emphasis on ceremony and apostolic succession, Spurgeon emphasized the inner calling and exemplary lifestyle. Significant is the returning reference to the moment of his conversion in which Spurgeon heard the gospel preached at the age of fifteen “by a poor uneducated man, a man who had never received


230 In his Autobiography Spurgeon repeatedly complaints about the ceremonial religion of his youth, which were unable to bring him to Christ: “Vain to us were the mere ordinances, . . . vain the ceremonies.” Charles H. Spurgeon, Autobiography, vol. 1 (4 vols.; Chicago/New York/Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1898), 76.
any training for the ministry”. 231 Although it is highly doubtful if in fact this man was a simple shoemaker, 232 it is noteworthy that Spurgeon took effort to stress how the effectiveness of this sermon contrasted with the outward and formal qualifications of the respective layman. Rather than formal ordination, Spurgeon therefore puts the weight on a minister’s pious living, “whatever ‘call’ a man may pretend to have, if he has not been called to holiness, he certainly has not been called to the ministry.” 233 He even notes that the level of piety required of a minister needs to transcend the average member. 234 In his posthumously published The Soul-Winner (1895), Spurgeon writes audaciously: “He [God] will speak through a fool if he be but a holy man.” 235 Ordination, he thought, reduced ministerial authority to a mere ritual act and, succinctly, absolved a minister from the need to develop a holy life. For Spurgeon the true minister could not be ‘made’ by a human rite such as ordination. True ordination originated in God’s divine calling as he saw described by Ephesians 4:11: “they are given of God, and consequently not self-elevated to their position.” 236 Spurgeon, like McClendon would do later, interpreted Ephesians 4:11 as a testimony to the unmediated nature of the distribution of the Spirit’s gifts to ‘all the saints’ among which the pastoral ministers. 237 Interesting is also his contrasting of the gifts of Christ and the ordination procedures within the Church of England:

The Queen can make a bishop of the Established Church, but only the ascended Lord can send a bishop to the true church. Prelates, popes, cardinals, vicars, prebends, canons, deans, the Lord has nothing to do with. I see not even the name of them in his word, but the very poorest pastor whom the Lord ordains is a gift of his ascending glory. 238

231 Spurgeon, Autobiography, 1:102-104. Spurgeon referred to the story of his conversion in multiple sermons, and in every volume of his autobiography, an account of this occasion can be found. Cf. C. van der Sluijs, Charles Haddon Spurgeon: Een Baptist tussen Hypercalvinisme en Modernisme (Kampen: Uitgeverij Kok, 1987), 21.
232 See Peter J. Morden, ‘Communion with Christ and his people’: The Spirituality of C.H. Spurgeon (CBHHS, vol. 5; Oxford: Regent’s Park College, 2010), 52. Morden mentions indications that raise considerable doubts about the identity of this preacher. Already shortly after Spurgeon’s death, a student of Pastor’s College by the name of Danzy Sheen, published a study of Spurgeon conversion. In which he, on the basis of the reports of eyewitnesses, claims that this preacher was in fact an ordained minister in the Methodist church, namely Rev. Robert Eaglen. Morden following these findings, declares that Spurgeon’s display of his own conversion “may have owed a significant amount to imaginative reconstruction.”
234 “Many are disqualified for office in the church who are well enough as simple members.” Spurgeon, Lectures to my students, 14. Hence, when a minister falls into gross sin, it is not only questionable if he can ever be restored into the ministry, but it is even a “fatal sign that ministerial graces were never in the man’s character.”
236 Spurgeon, Lectures to my students, 26.
Again we observe the sharp contrasting of sorts between the established church and nonconformity, between official ministers and preachers, between human authorities and God’s calling. For Spurgeon, true ministry derived solely from Christ and not from human institutions. How far Spurgeon pushed the Christological authority behind the ministry appears notably at the end of his section on Ephesians 4:12, where he calls his congregation to “[h]onour Christ in every true minister; see not so much the man as his Master in him.”239 With these words, Spurgeon seems to have embraced some idea of Christological representation. The firm difference with the ‘ordained clergy’ is that it was not linked to a human ceremony and church hierarchy.

The above impression of Spurgeon’s aversion of ordination further underlines that the controversy surrounding ordained ministry cannot be studied independently from the interpretation of ordination itself. It illustrates moreover how its practice became untenable by its association with human institution and authority, which we encountered also in McClendon’s criticism. Of course, at the background plays the continuing anti-Catholicism that made most dissenters rebound to a more minimized view of churchmanship, as David Bebbington notes.240 Spurgeon’s fear, like John Gill and John Sutcliff earlier, is the equation of the divine calling to ministry with the human act of laying on of hands, thereby reducing God’s sovereign call to a mere ritual, as commonly caught in the Latin phrase ex opere operato. Such a ‘sacramental’ understanding of ordination, directly associated with the character indelebilis, divorced the ministerial office from the ethical behavior with which it was to be exercised. Though Spurgeon certainly did not oppose sacramentalism as such,241 he clearly objected to theology of ordained ministry that prevented the need for ethical accountability, both to the congregation and to God. Spurgeon’s criticism is directed to a mechanistic concept of ordination, in which the rite of ordination itself is understood as the cause of a person’s ministerial office. As such, he concluded, ordination was in conflict with God’s sovereign calling and distribution of gifts. On the same basis, he writes ironically in his Autobiography after two decades in ministry and training ministers: “Here are reverend students of an unreverend preacher, . . . the President of this College, having never undergone such a process, . . . remains an unordained, unrecognized person to this day, and has not yet discovered the peculiar loss which he has sustained thereby.”242 Hence, the lack of theological intelligibility of its practice led Spurgeon to its complete

241 See Fowler, More Than A Symbol, 79-83; Curtis W. Freeman, “To Feed Upon by Faith: Nourishment from the Lord’s Table,” in Baptist Sacramentalism, 204-205; and notably Morden, ‘Communion with Christ and his people’, 85-89, 165-189.
denouncement. It seems that the congregational tradition had no (longer) any theological sound of its own to substantiate the practice of ordination.

Given our objective of formulating outlines for a constructive theology of ordained ministry, the following criterion can be distilled: *a theology of ordained ministry can only be found acceptable if it assures and explains a continual accountability to God as sovereign Lord and to his church as body of accountability.* Ordained ministers should never be absolved from the responsibility to live a moral life in correspondence with their ministerial vocation. Every concept of the rite of ordination should therefore contribute to a minister’s accountability. It seems that the discussion of ordained ministry since the nineteenth century has been largely determined by the distrust of institutional religion and its ‘sacrosanct’ clergy which are found to be contradiction with the character of congregational ecclesiology. The absence of solid theological grounding made its practice disappear, leaving behind the question if a ministry recognized by ordination still had a place within a Baptist church, or the broader Free Church tradition. In its place came a thoroughgoing charismatic interpretation of the general priesthood, emphasizing the ministerial giftedness of every believer over the exclusive ministry of the ordained offices.243

1.6.3. Ministerial Exclusivity and the Ministry of Every Member
An example of a contemporary charismatic ecclesiology is the Free Church perspective offered in *After Our Likeness* (1998) by Yale-professor Miroslav Volf. It has been widely accredited for its theological insight and ecumenical power. Volf approaches ordained ministry from the wider concept of charismata, aiming to avoid any suggestion of elevation, exclusivity or distinct status surrounding ordained ministry. Depending heavily on Jürgen Moltmann’s participative Trinitarian theology,244 he develops an egalitarian view of the Trinity that provides him with the motive for an egalitarian ecclesiology.245 Since the triune God exists as an “symmetrical-polycentric” pattern of being, the church cannot allow for any form hierarchical ordering. Like McClendon and

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243 “... one of the distinctive emphases of the Free church ecclesiologies has been the insistence on the right and gifting of each believer for ministry as equal partners.” Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, 65.
245 Volf’s egalitarian concept of the church is also prominent in his *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, And Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).
Spurgeon, Volf too aims to give his ecclesiological approach some historic substance by adopting the ‘first Baptist’ John Smyth as his precursor. Smyth, like Volf aims to do, is said to have embraced an egalitarian structure. It is no coincidence, then, to observe Volf’s enthusiastic reference to Peter Lake’s designation of the Separatists (see § 1.5.3.), who described them as a “populist revolt against any sort of ministerial elite.”

Volf therefore considers English Separatists as fellow combatants in the pursuit of an anticlerical ecclesiology. In the introduction, Volf defines this egalitarian objective as follows:

I argue that the presence of Christ, which constitutes the church, is mediated not simply through ordained ministers but through the whole congregation, that the whole congregation functions as *mater ecclesia* to the children engendered by the Holy Spirit, and that the whole congregation is called to engage in ministry and make decisions about leadership roles.

Volf’s major concern is to avoid a coercive authoritarianism that negates the communal dimension of the Free Church tradition. For hierarchy stands directly over against communion. The church can therefore only be a ‘we’ if Christ is mediated through the whole membership (cf. Mat. 18:20). Hence, the church exists first as the concrete local assembly of believers, who through the free confession of Jesus as Lord, anticipate the eschatological gathering of the entire people of God. In other words, for Volf, there is not first an universal church which becomes visible in a local church, there is only an eschatological whole, which is anticipated locally.

Volf argues therefore against Roman Catholic ecclesiology (Joseph Ratzinger) and Orthodox ecclesiology (John Zizioulas), that the Free Church tradition of “voluntarism and egalitarianism are goods that must be preserved.” For Christ lives in the church through the multiple mutual relations of the membership by the binding activity of the Spirit. And so, Volf concludes, it is not individual faith that constitutes the church, but communal faith (*communio fidelium*). And thus, ordained ministry is not required to mediate Christ and ‘turn’ a gathering into a church. Instead, the communal character of the church puts the receptive activity of the joined believers first, even before the individual. For personal faith is first ecclesially mediated. Volf expressively states that this mediation is not by Christ ‘with’ the church (as a secondary subject), but directly

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251 See Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 146-151  
‘through’ the church as priesthood of believers. Christ presents all his gifts only in the ecclesial whole. For if the church would not be subject of salvation, people would be dependent on ordained ministry to function as operators of this activity. But, the confessional community is not dependent on any separate form of mediation. Being part of the church is having communion with God and with his church. 253 Hence, ‘being Christian’ is a social activity by the indwelling of the Spirit who through faith enjoins believers into the fellowship with Father and Son. 254

The theological justifications for these notions are tied to the internal relations of the trinity, who stand in an eternal equal (perichoretic) relationship. The Trinity constitutes itself by being a triune relationship: “In every divine person as a subject, the other persons also indwell.”255 Likewise, the church is constituted not by one subject but by the communion of interdependent subjects, by Volf called a polycentric community. 256 Strangely enough, though, Volf ‘loans’ his wording from Avery Dulles who advocated the same for Roman Catholic hierarchical ecclesiology. 257 The polycentric concept of the church is by Volf brought in relation with Luther’s concept of the priesthood of all believers. First in the form of the call to faith mediated through the church, and second in the distribution of the spiritual gifts (charismata): “Christians are called to enter into communion with Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:9) and to confess and witness him with words and deeds (1 Pet. 2:9). At their initiation, they receive from God’s Spirit the authority and capacity for this ministry.” 258

Volf’s pneumatological approach to ministry enables him to acknowledge only a ‘general calling to ministry’. The Spirit constitutes the whole membership (and thus not exclusively officeholders) and bestows his gifts on every member. Every member is therefore a minister, whereas the content of ministry may differ on the basis of his or her specific charismata (cf. 1 Cor. 12:11). 259 ‘After the likeness’ of the Trinity, the relations between all gifted members are symmetrical and reciprocal. Again, the mutual interplay between members is the channel through which the charismata are distributed by the Spirit. Volf, elaborating on Dulles’ terminology, speaks of the “polycentric participative model.” 260 Of course, this eliminates every differentiation between laity and clergy. Behind his “theological elevation of the laity” 261 lies his basic theological conviction that

253 See Volf, After Our Likeness, 172-181.
255 See extensively Volf, After Our Likeness, 191-220.
256 See Volf, After Our Likeness, 224.
258 Volf, After Our Likeness, 225.
259 See Volf, After Our Likeness, 225-227.
260 Volf, After Our Likeness, 227. This is put over against “asymmetrical-monocentric models” found in the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church, in which the bishop constitutes in persona Christi the church that is ordered around them (236)
261 Volf, After Our Likeness, 228. The confession is a central element in the participation of the laity. The church exists by the confession of Christ as Lord before one another, so doing the Spirit constitutes them into a church. So “the
Christ constitutes and acts through the gifts of the whole membership and not exclusively through an individual officeholder. Still, Volf is not hostile to ordained office. John Smyth, his chosen model, allows him to incorporate ordained office in a more egalitarian way, as "the particular charismata of leadership."262 He observes:

Officeholders do not stand opposite the church as those acting exclusively *in persona Christi.* Since the Spirit of Christ acts in them not by the power of their office, but rather in the execution of their ministry, their actions do not differ in principle from those of any other member of the church. Insofar as each person contributes in his or her own specific way to the various aspects of church life, that person is acting as a “representative” of Christ to those affected by that action.263

In his effort to erase every possible spiritual differentiation between members Volf denies ordained ministry any sacramental value that has not also been given to any other member. The Spirit who has freely given the charisma of office is always free to replace it with a different gift (1 Cor. 12:28; cf. Acts 20:28). For if ordained office is just a spiritual gift as any other, “there can be no difference in principle between officeholders and other members of the church.”264 To Volf ordained ministry is reshaped into 'leadership', without permanent character. Different from the Roman Catholic and Orthodox understanding, who perceive the whole congregation as the entire catholic church, the vision of Volf regards the local church as 'the whole' that sustains the calling of an officer. The divine calling and endowment of an officeholder, or particular priesthood, are recognized by the ordaining activity of the entire congregation. Hence both officers and laymen are thus “fundamentally equal.”265

After having established the basic egalitarian and inclusive character of ecclesial ministry, Volf continues to address the particularity of ordained office. The specific character of official ministry is its public responsibility for whole community.266 Although Volf rejects ontological representation, he does recognize functional representation: acting in the name of the congregation, as well as acting in name of Christ before the congregation. Denying the necessity of ordained ministry ‘to be’ *(esse)* church,
ministers continue to be a vital part of congregational life: “Ministries performed by officeholders are indispensable for the church.” In other words, it seems that Volf refuses to make any differentiation in the nature of ordained and non-ordained ministry, but does recognize distinction in their degree of institutionalization. Ordained offices are potentially more stable, and provide continuity and unity. So on the one hand Volf tries to keep ordained ministry far away from any inkling of hierarchy and sacramentalism, on the other hand he avoids to reduce total upheaval of the role of ordained ministers. This search for middle ground is also visible in his definition and explanation of ordination.

First, ordination must not be reduced to a mere human commission, nor elevated to a sacramental act, but “ordination is to be understood as a public reception of a charisma given by God and focused on the local church as a whole.” By his emphasis on reception Volf underlines how God the Spirit is Subject, and not the congregation, bishop or presbytery, and by laying the focus on the congregation as a whole, Volf prevents ordination to become an ‘one to one’ affair between God and the specific candidate. In essence, the whole church is ordained as the recipient of the Spirit’s ongoing process of charismatic bestowal by the recognition of the specific gifts of the particular candidate. Therefore it is essential that the local church be present. Second, ordination should not, by definition, entail an unlimited commission to ordained ministry. Of course, since ordained ministry is not any different from other gifts in nature, the Spirit is free to give and take, and the congregation as primal recipient, can release a person from its office. And third, ordination is always bound to the local congregation. This is an obvious result of Volf’s earlier rejection of any kind of transcendent ‘universal church’ above the local church. A local ordination cannot be simultaneously an ordination by the universal whole, for the local church is already the ‘ecclesial whole’ in the full sense of the word. Furthermore, a spiritual gift is always a gift to a particular congregation, and so is the gift of leadership. A gift which a church ‘accepts/receives’ by election, which is the practical outcome of the process of congregational discernment to recognize those who have been called by God.

The contribution of Volf further underlines and explains McClendon’s conflict with ordained ministry. Specifically his belief that it hampers the common participation, popularized in the expression ‘every member ministry’. Volf’s solution is an exclusive charismatic understanding of ministry which expresses the general priesthood. As such, he avoids that ordained ministry becomes an independent channel of mediation next to the congregation: “divine authority must always come by way of the whole.”
therefore locates ordained ministry exclusively within a pneumatological framework, not unlike McClendon does, yet without any reference to Ephesians 4:11. Volf’s ‘ordained ministry’ appears, after closer inspection, to be nothing more than the particular gift of leadership, and ordination is nothing more than a joined reception of this particular gift. His egalitarian concept of communal ordination begs, of course, the question: why still speak of an ordained ministry when it in fact concerns the entire church? The exclusive pneumatological approach to ordained ministry allows Volf to avoid any independent representation of Christ’s presence outside the mutual independency of every member. His argument seems to be solely grounded in his assumption that if ordination implies a ‘setting apart’ of a singular office, the ordained ministry would not require the congregation for the reception and exercise thereof, and thus effectually leads to hierarchical inequality. Volf’s approach shows why ordained ministry has become controversial. The theological acception of a special ministry is thought to bypass the direct relation between Christ and his community by putting an ‘extra link’ in between, which would essentially destroy the congregational character of the church as ecclesial and ministerial ‘whole’.

With regard to our study, however, the following criterion can be derived: If a concept of ordained ministry is to be accepted it must be consistent with the charismatic gifts of the Spirit to the whole membership and constituent of a mutual interdependent character of the local church. To put it differently, the ordained ministry may never nullify the ministerial participation of the gifted congregation, nor may ordination become a declaration of a minister’s independency from the charismatic community.

1.6.4. Criteria

From our analysis three criteria have been established to which any concept of ordained ministry has to answer in order to be found credible. These criteria will subsequently provide a normative framework for the retrieval of Browne’s concept of ordained ministry that this study anticipates.

The first criterion is communal priesthood. Ordained ministry should never lead to the displacement of priestly ministry of the church in the world. For the concrete gathering of believers, as an ‘ecclesial whole’, precedes the ordained ministry. They are a people who are directly joined to Christ and enjoy his presence without the need for the mediating presence of an ordained minister. The presence of Christ is always linked with the communal (‘gathering’) character of the church. Both McClendon and Volf unanimously agree that the general priesthood defines the entire local congregation as a ‘participatory church’. An acceptance of a special ministry set apart by ordination then could be a source of furthering lay passivity, even leading up to the replacement of the priestly community by the representative priesthood of a singular minister. If a theology
of ordained ministry is to be appropriate, it should rather strengthen the communal priesthood than be a threat.

The second criterion is permanent accountability. An appropriate concept of ordained ministry should substantiate the coherence of the ministerial vocation and the moral life that might be expected to accompany the exercise of this office. However, if the ministerial call is reduced to the act of laying on of hands, a minister’s office would henceforth be irreproachable to the congregation and, on a deeper level, be incapable of explaining a minister’s permanent responsibility toward God. Ordination can therefore never imply a ‘private act’ between God and the ordinand, nor carry an indelible character. Rather, ordination should be an expression of the need for accountability to God and the ecclesial community. I am aware that hereby Colwell’s unequivocal acceptance of the indelible character is thereby already untenable (see § 1.4.). His call for a sacramental theology will, however, be taken in consideration as this study reaches its final evaluation.

The final and third criterion is interdependence. A concept of ordination can only be considered appropriate when it does not conflict with the charismatic participation of the ecclesial whole of the local church and consequently sustains the mutual dependency that defines a congregational ecclesiology.272 As already explained above, congregational ecclesiology explains Christ’s presence in the church by the intermediacy of the gathering of the faithful, who are united by the Spirit. Together these three criteria will enable us to determine the outlines of a constructive theology of ordained ministry that is beneficial to the present debate.

1.7. Outline and Prospect

Thus far, this chapter has offered an elaborate introductory to the main purpose of this study and its significance (§ 1.1.), the methodology used (§ 1.2.), the historical challenges with regard to congregational ecclesiology (§ 1.3.), the systematic challenges facing the present-day church (§ 1.4.), and the state of research into Browne’s theology (§ 1.5.). Finally, we have selected three criteria on the basis of the main areas of conflict to take our historical analysis a step further and determine its systematical relevance for a constructive proposal (§ 1.6.). In this last paragraph I will give a brief outline of the forthcoming chapters.

272 Cf. “Though Baptists differ about the exact meaning of ordination, historically and confessionally they stand united as far as congregational involvement in ‘discerning the mind of Christ’ is concerned. For Baptists congregational decision-making is a vital means for the sake of spiritual discernment. Ecclesial decisions as important as the choice of an elder or a pastor can only be validated by mutuality and interdependence of all saints involved in the local church. Ordination without the empowering consent of the congregation of the church may be deemed ‘defective’. Ecclesial selection and ordination are the exclusive right of the people, embedded in elementary grass roots motions of church life.” Bakker, “Towards a Catholic Understanding of Baptist Congregationalism,” 179-180.
Part 1 of this study will be occupied with a reconsideration of Robert Browne’s concept of ordained ministry. The forthcoming chapter, Chapter 2, will therefore be dedicated to a contextual reading of Browne’s immediate ideological context, which is primarily based on secondary literature. After a short account of Browne’s life story, a historical overview will be presented of the ecclesiological developments purposely with regard to the University of Cambridge in the sixteenth century. Particularly the rise of the Cambridge Presbyterians during the 1570’s, the time of Browne’s own enrollment at this university, will be of particular interest. These Presbyterians were outspoken advocates of a local approach to ecclesiology and called for better trained preaching ministry in every parish, to be appointed by consent of the people. Special attention will be given to the lectures of Thomas Cartwright, the Admonition to Parliament (1572), and the thoughts of Richard Greenham, who was for a short time Browne’s mentor. The outcome of this contextual reading will enable us to analyze Browne’s own writings in Chapter 3, the centerpiece of this study, as it is concerned with a fresh theological analysis of Browne’s primary writings. Selected are the five documents written during his Separatist years (1582-1585). In these documents Browne sets out and defines his concept of a covenantal ecclesiology including his respective view of ordained ministry. This chapter will allow us to sufficiently answer the established lacunae of § 1.5. And, furthermore, an assessment will be given of Browne’s particular contribution to a contemporary theology of ordained ministry.

Part 2 will bring us back to contemporary theology and present debate. As already observed in § 1.4. the church finds itself in a new era which forces us to rethink its role and position in society in a time where this is no longer self-evident and assumed. Chapter 4 aims to engage in these contemporary challenges by seeking further directions within the literature of Stanley Hauerwas and Kevin J. Vanhoozer. Two theologians who represent the postliberal and post-conservative streams in current theology and who have explicitly involved themselves with the ministerial crisis of today. In this study, Hauerwas and Vanhoozer represent Browne’s dialogue partners who have not only addressed the issues raised by critics of ordained ministry (§ 1.6.), but also significantly incorporated the post-Christendom turn in the Western world in their thinking. These theologians will help determine the systematic relevance of Browne’s contribution in order to present the final retrieval of in Chapter 5. In this final chapter Browne’s contribution to the present debate is evaluated and liquidated by an extensive systematic theological reflection on the basis of the three criteria: communal priesthood, permanent accountability and interdependency. Every criterion will additionally be mirrored with an exegetical analysis of Ephesians 4:11 in order to provide a responsible reception of this text. Ultimately, this chapter will deliver an impetus to the present debate by means of three ‘calls’ that stipulate how a theology of ordained ministry for Baptists and the broader Free Church tradition can be articulated.
My aim throughout this study will be to hold together systematic theology and
church history, ecclesiology and the (historical) reality of the church, tradition and
renewal, and a wide variety of theological contributions—notably Dutch, British, and
North-American authors—as we explore how Robert Browne sought to reformulate a
theology of ordained ministry amidst controversy. The purpose is to retrieve his
contribution for the development of a constructive proposal for the contemporary
church.
PART I

A RECONSIDERATION OF ORDAINED MINISTRY IN ROBERT BROWNE’S LITERATURE
Chapter 2

ORDAINED MINISTRY IN THE CONTEXT OF SIXTEENTH-CENTURY CAMBRIDGE:
A HISTORY OF CONTROVERSY

2.1. Introduction
In order to understand Robert Browne’s literature, especially his concept of ordained ministry, it is necessary to have some glimpses of the historical context in which he developed his ecclesiological ideas. I will therefore begin this chapter with a brief sketch of Browne’s life, with a focus on the years prior to and during his separation (c. 1570-1585). It is in this period that he wrote the treatises that will shape the heart of our analysis in Chapter 3. The reconstruction of Browne’s context will mainly revolve around Cambridge and its university. It is there where the consequences of the establishment of the Church of England, the influences of the Continental Reformation, as well as the rise of Puritan movements had significant impact on religious life and discourse. Particularly of interest for this study, is the substantial attention concerning clerical education, the changing views of ordained ministry, and the controversies over clerical apparel, hierarchy, and apparent inadequacy at Cambridge to address the new situation. In addition, special reference will be made to the use of Ephesians 4:11 in relationship to ordained ministry. As such, this chapter will serve as a biographical and contextual lens which offers insight in the social and theological circles that shaped Browne’s thought, both by factors of inspiration and opposition. While this chapter will have a predominant historical outlook, it will maintain a systematic theological focus by concentrating on the question of ordained ministry.

2.2. The Story of Robert Browne
For the reconstruction of Robert Browne’s life, I will depend on a critical reading of the articles and books which appeared particularly in the early twentieth century, especially Dwight Smith’s extensive article of 1937, and Browne’s own description in A True and Short Declaration (1583) which was included in the Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts (ENCT, 1953), which was edited by Albert Peel and Leland H. Carlson.

Robert Browne (1550?-1633) was born as a third son in a prosperous family, well-connected and of some influence in the region. His family lived in Tolethorpe Hall, near Stamford, Rutlandshire. It was a county which the Browne family served as major

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benefactors, such as building a hospital and restoring the village church.² Robert’s father, Anthony Browne, and possibly a close friend of Henry VIII,³ served three times as Sheriff of Rutland. Most importantly, at least in view of Browne’s later life, is the distant affiliation between the Browne family and the Cecils. William Cecil — after 25 February 1571 known as Lord Burghley — was the most trusted counselor of Queen Elizabeth.⁴ As most well-to-do families of his day, Browne received an education of the highest level at Cambridge University, where he enrolled in 1570 at Corpus Christi College and graduated B.A. in 1572.⁵ Upon arriving Browne must have found Cambridge in disarray. Already a center for Puritan theology and a hotbed of the vestment controversy during the 1560’s, new cries were articulated for a further reformation of the Church of England. Browne, in his autobiography, describes Cambridge accordingly as “knovvne & counted forvward in religion,” a place of progressive religion.⁶ A rising group of young theologians advocated a more biblically-orientated ecclesiology after the example of Calvin’s Geneva. Noteworthy was the dismissal of its ringleader Thomas Cartwright — the newly appointed Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity — for nonconformity in the very same year that Browne arrived. Cartwright, apparently criticized in his lectures on Acts the structures of the English church and called for ministerial equality, the necessity of preaching, and congregational consent in the appointment of parish ministry. The extent to which the ecclesiological controversy in Cambridge influenced the young Browne may be inferred

² Frederick J. Powicke suggests the possibility of Anabaptist influence on the young Browne, due to the presence of so called ‘Strangers’ in Stamford, already during his youth (see Robert Browne: Pioneer of Modern Congregationalism [London: Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1910]] 11-12). However, this suggestion is highly speculative and fails to meet the available facts, since Browne himself never mentions meeting any Anabaptists at all, nor is there any evidence that he had any concerns regarding the state of the church prior to his enrollment at Cambridge University.

³ Cf. Smith, ”Robert Browne, Independent,” 290; and A. G. Dickens, The English Reformation, 2nd ed. (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), 220. The first Browne to be mentioned is John Browne, who was alderman of Stamford, and purchased Tolethorpe Hall. Consecutive sons also served as aldermen (Stamford), sheriffs (Rutland, Lincoln), and even as Member of Parliament for Stamford, see Powicke, Robert Browne, 9-10; and Smith, ”Robert Browne, Independent,” 289-291.

⁴ See for William Cecil especially Stephen Alford, Burghley: William Cecil at the Court of Elizabeth I (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); and Susan Doran, Elizabeth I and Her Circle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 219-246. Frederick Powicke expresses his surprise over Cecil’s recognition of his kinship to Browne: “A more shadowy kinship it would be hard to conceive; and Cecil might certainly have been justified in denying its existence had he wished.” Powicke, Robert Browne, 10. Besides their distant relationship, both families were probably on friendly terms due to fact that they both delivered MP’s and came from roughly the same area. For an elaborate explanation, see Smith, ”Robert Browne, Independent,” 290.

⁵ Browne probably entered Corpus Christi in 1570, being placed eighteenth on the list. A respectable position, which, according to Powicke, implies a thorough grounding in classics (see Robert Browne, 12). Though he usually is considered to be born around 1550, this would make him at the time of his matriculation circa nineteen or even twenty years of age. However, it was rather customary to matriculate between the age of fourteen and sixteen. Significant in this regard is the raising of the age limit to a minimum of fourteen in the same year Browne entered (see Craig R. Thompson, Universities in Tudor England [Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1959], 28). It seems more likely, therefore, to date his birth closer to 1555 instead of the customary 1550.

from his choice to refuse the priestly orders. This was against the normal course of events which, because of his family’s reputation and influence, would have certainly gained him a good living. Instead, he became a schoolmaster. In his autobiography he describes his own frame of mind in this period:

Hereuppon he fell into great care, & vvas soare greeued vvhile he long considered many thinges amisse, & the cause of all, to be the vvofull and lamētable state of the church. Wherefore he laboured much to knovve his duetie in such thiges, & because the church of God is his kingdom, & his name especially is thereby magnified; he vvholy bent him selfe to searh [sic, search] & find out the matters of the church: as hovv it vvas to be guided and ordered, & vwhat abuses there were in the ecclesiastical government then vsed. These thinges, he had long before debated in him selfe, & vvith others, & suffered also some trouble about thē at Cābridge.7

Significant is the reference to Cambridge as the place where his doubts over the state of the church already brought him in trouble. It is most likely that he thereby implies the controversy surrounding Cartwright’s lectures and the successive commotion surrounding his removal. Where Browne became a schoolmaster is unknown, except that it was in “some town.”8 After three years he got into conflict with the local authorities for sharing his Puritan convictions with his pupils, which led to his loss of his teaching position. He then seems to have continued his teaching in the private sphere, thanks to support from friends and like-minded citizens. An outbreak of the plague in c. 1575/1576,9 nevertheless, forced him to leave town and he returned to live with his father at Tolethorpe. Yet, after an unknown period of time, his continuing concern about the unreformed state of the English church made him revisit the Cambridge area in order to

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7 See Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 397.
9 There is some disagreement over the exact date of the outbreak of this plague. Henry Dexter and Champlin Burrage argue for 1578 (see H.M. Dexter, The Congregationalism of the Last Three Hundred Years, as Seen in its Literature: With Special Reference to Certain Recondite, Neglected, or Disputed Passages [New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1880], 65; and Burrage, The True Story of Robert Browne, 3) and Powicke for 1575/1576 (Powicke, Robert Browne, 17). The latter fits better with more recent historiography, where reference is made to a severe outbreak of the plague in Stamford in 1575 (cf. Aubrey R. Plowman, “Stamford and the plague, 1604,” The Stamford Historian 4 [1980]: 27-34; and I.F.D. Shrewsbury, A History of the Bubonic Plague in the British Islands [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970], 219-220). During the sixteenth century plagues continued to be a fearsome enemy, including many lethal infectious diseases, among which also the bubonic plague or the Black Death. Outbreaks were largely, not entirely, confined to the medium-size and larger towns. See for the plague in sixteenth-century Southern England, besides the aforementioned book, Susan Scott, and Christopher J. Duncan, Biology of Plagues: Evidence from Historical Populations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), esp. 165-174.
study with Richard Greenham, in his day a foremost and exemplary Puritan minister. He ther had dealing with M. Greenham, who of all others he hard saie was moste forvarde, and though that vwith him & by him he should haue some staie of his care & hope of his purpose.” Browne expressly looked for Greenham’s spiritual guidance in ecclesiological matters in order to find further direction and come to terms with his struggles. As said, Greenham’s reputation as parish pastor and mentor of several young scholars was duly noted and several young men stayed in his house to receive spiritual formation. Greenham’s household, if we follow Browne’s words, functioned like an Old Testament ‘school of prophets’, not unlike Calvin’s own Genevan ‘school of preachers’. It appears that, under the guidance of Greenham, Browne quickly gained a reputation as a lively preacher, and Greenham even allowed Browne to make use of his pulpit without the prescribed preaching license: “And although he said, that vwithout special leave & special vword from the bishop, he was to suffer none to teach openlie in his parish, yet Vwithout anie such leave he suffered R. B.”

This favor is remarkable, certainly when considering Greenham’s public aptitude for conformism and avoidance of overt conflict. According to Dwight Smith Greenham’s exceptional leniency suggests that Browne earned his absolute trust in the handling of Scripture. This reputation as able preacher soon gained him an invitation to take charge of St. Benet’s church in Cambridge, notably “vwith consent of the Maior & Vicechancelar” of Cambridge. On this point, however, Browne’s career and his convictions seem to collide. While a lectureship was a honorable position with relative freedom from ecclesiastical ties, Browne’s increasing difficulty with the Church of England—

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11 Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 398. Browne’s recollection of Greenham’s reputation seems to slightly contradict his image in contemporary literature, in which he is portrayed as a cooperative Puritan avoiding unnecessary conflicts with the church authorities in order to preserve peace and unity, see Parker, and Carlson, ‘Practical Divinity’, 15-20; and John H. Primus, Richard Greenham: The Portrait of an Elizabethan Pastor (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998), 185, 191, 196-199.

12 “Wherefore, as those which in old tyme were called the prophets & children of the prophets & liued to gether, because of corruptio among others, so came he vnto him.” Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 398. This practice among Puritans closely resembles the Genevan company of pastors, see Erik A. De Boer, The Genevan School of the Prophets (THR, no. 62; Genève: Librairie Droz S.A., 2012), 71-93.

13 Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 398
15 Powicke, Robert Browne, 18.
16 Cf. Christopher Hill, Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England (London: Secker & Warburg, 1964), 79-123; Paul S. Seaver, The Puritan Lectureships: The Politics of Religious Dissent, 1556-1662 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970), esp. 15-54,73-87, 289-294; and J.B. Jenkins, Henry Smith: England’s Silver-Tongued Preacher (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1984), 29-30, 33-38. Lectureships were a form of ministry existing parallel to the parochial clergy, only better paid, and less restrained by ecclesiastical oversight. Moreover, parochial clergy were appointed by the bishops, and lecturers were appointed and paid by a town corporation or private citizen usually of Puritan
especially with the illegitimacy of the bishop’s authority in matters of the local church—makes him renounce this offer: “For he judged that the church vvas to call and receaue him, if he should there be chosen and appointed to preach.” 17 The difference which emerged between Browne and his Puritan circle (Greenham’s?) seems to mainly concerned with the question whether unbiblical deviation of the Church of England could be tolerated or not and if the ministry of bishops was indeed legitimate. Browne refused to accept the bishop’s authority any longer and continued preaching without a license. Yet Browne still writes that he “sought meanes off quietness so much as vvas lavuefull.” 18 On his behalf, his older brother (Philip?) applied for a preaching license from Archbishop Grindal to prevent his younger brother from future problems, which he was granted on 6/7 June 1579. 19 Robert Browne simply returned this license and continued his preaching ministry. The Bishop of Ely, Richard Cox, notified of Browne’s uns submissive behavior by William Cecil, sent his chaplain Richard Bancroft with a letter to prohibit Browne of preaching any longer. 20 It appears that Browne was in poor health during his confrontation with Bancroft and he quickly gave in. Bancroft, a future Bishop of London and Canterbury, developed himself in those years in a staunch anti-Puritan. 21 As it happens, only a few years later, somewhere between 1583-1585, he wrote a pamphlet known as The Heresies in R: Brownes Booke, which includes several sections of Browne’s works, including his autobiographical A True and Short Declaration (1583). 22 In a second book, entitled Certen Slaudorous Speeches against the Present Estate of the Church of Englande published to the People by the Precisians (c. 1590), Bancroft presents an inclination, generally to provide thorough preaching, compensating for the less educated parochial ministers. Lecturers only required an episcopal ‘preaching license’, which gave permission to preach in a certain district, parish or pulpit.

17 Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 399.  
18 Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 403.  
19 For both the Dismisorry Letter and the Preaching License provided with an English translation, see Burrage, The Story of Robert Browne, 4-6. It is difficult to establish what exactly happened surrounding this preaching license. Browne seems to have thrown the first license into the fire, lost his second one, and finally returned the third.  
20 “The bishops officer named Bancraft”. Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 405. Cf. Burrage, The Story of Robert Browne, 8-9; and Powicke, Robert Browne, 21-22. The letter that Bancroft carried, was a general injunction issued by the Privy Council (then under leadership of Lord Burghley) to stop unauthorized religious activities, giving the bishop the lawful means to act against nonconformist preachers like Browne. Bancroft later on in his life referred to this episode in his final testimonial before his appointment as Archbishop in of Canterbury in 1604, where it is stated, that “[h]e was sent for from Cambridge, to preach at Bury, when the pretended Reformation was begun these, without staying for ye Magistrate, as the term was then;” Albert Peel, Tracts ascribed to Richard Bancroft (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), xviii. For the dealings of Richard Bancroft with Puritanism and Separatism, see Robert S. Paul, “The Writings of Richard Bancroft and the Brownists,” CHST 17 (1952-1955): 83-90; and Patrick Collinson, Richard Bancroft and Elizabethan Anti-Puritanism (Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 28-38.  
extensive refutation of presbyterian ecclesiology, in which Browne’s name appears side by side with Thomas Cartwright and other noted Presbyterians.23

After rejoining his former college friend, Robert Harrison, who refrained from taking orders due to his interference, Browne relocates to Norwich. The choice for Norwich is motivated by the same stimulus that made him seek Greenham’s guidance: “he remembred some in Norfolke, Vvhome he harde saie vvere verie forvard.”24 Norwich was in Browne’s day with 13.000 inhabitants one of the largest cities on the British Isles, only second to London.25 Like London, Norwich too was a hotbed of nonconformity and home to groups of Puritans who regularly met for ‘prophesying’.26 Though never clearly established, some scholars hint at the influence of Anabaptist thought upon Browne in this period of time, due to the presence of a major Anabaptist community in the area of Norwich. Despite the probability of encountering Dutch Anabaptists during his itinerary ministry,27 conclusive evidence of such interaction remains absent. There is only little evidence of Browne’s influence upon a Dutch reformed congregation.28 In Norwich, Browne and Harrison continued their search of a more Biblical ecclesiology, specifically the practice of congregational discipline without episcopal oversight. Here the first traces of disagreement between both men began to emerge. Browne appears to be the more dominant character of the two and he convinces Harrison to join him in forming a small dissenter community. Not long after, Browne found himself in trouble with the authorities, and he did some time in prison. Browne’s name appears in a letter sent in the spring of 1581 by Bishop Freke, which implies that his teaching caused some insurgence against the Church of England.29 The recipient of

27 This appears from a letter send to Lord Burghley in which Bishop of Norwich, Dr. Freke, writes: “And herewith I do send unto your Lordship other articles ministred against one Robert Browne a minister. & his personall answeres therunto, the said party being lately apprehended in this country vpon Complante made by many godly preachers for delyvering vnto y’ people corrupt & contentious doctrine, conceaved & sett downe more at large in y’ same articles. his arrogant spirite of reproving being such as is to be merveled at the man being also to be feared least if he were at libertie he would seduce y’ vulgar sort of the people who greatly depeud of him [sic] assembling them selues together to the number of an hundred at a tyme in privat howses & coventicles to heare him, not without danger of some yll event”. Quoted in Burrage, The Story of Robert Browne, 14; also Timothy George, John Robinson and the Separatist Tradition (NABPR dissertation series, no. 1; Macon: Mercer University, 1982), 37.
this letter, his kinsman William Cecil, Lord Burghley, intercedes on Browne’s behalf and made a request for a charitable treatment. However, in case Browne was not willing to change his ways, he was to be transferred to Burghley himself. In the meantime, members of Browne’s company faced such opposition that they considered leaving England for Presbyterian Scotland. The size of Browne’s group must be estimated between thirty to sixty persons. From prison Browne insists on staying in England, in order to continue their mission of bringing further reformation. It is unknown how many imprisonments Browne suffered during his Norwich-period, but at a given moment it was too much. The small group jointly decided to sail to the relative tolerant Holland. Browne reports: “thei all agreed, & vvere fullie persvvaded that the Lord did cal thē out of Englaud.” Shortly before embarkation, the company made their memorable covenant and formed a real separated church, and thus formed “the first Puritan company to emigrate as a church.” Steven Paas assumes that Browne had a meeting with ‘second generation’ Separatist John Greenwood only shortly before his departure. Greenwood, together with Henry Barrow, would take over Browne’s ‘mantle’ as leader Separatist thinkers after Browne’s humiliating retraction in 1585.

Leaving England required a permit, so it must have been quite an undertaking for Browne and his followers to flee unnoticed. Nevertheless the congregation reappears in the Dutch commercial port Middelburg, somewhere in the late autumn of 1581.  

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31 The decision to choose the Low Countries (‘Netherlands’) as place of refuge seems obvious. In those days, the Low Countries (viz. Holland) were England’s most intimate ally, both in trade as in Protestant spirit, jointly going to war against Spain. Many Englishmen and Scots came to serve in the Dutch Army (cf. Geoffrey Parker, “Foreword,” in Exercise of Arms: Warfare in the Netherlands, 1568-1648, ed. Marco van der Hoeven [HW, vol. 1; Leiden: Brill, 1997], ix). Consequently, a large English and Scottish community was already present in Holland. In the late sixteenth century at least 6 English (speaking) churches existed, increasing with another 34 in the seventeenth century (see Sprunger, Dutch Puritanism, ix, 3-5). The relative tolerance towards strangers and people of different religious conviction, embodied by William of Orange (the Steward/Stadtholder of Holland and Zeeland since 5 July 1572), was known across Western Europe and drew people towards the Dutch cities. See Martin van Gelderen, The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt, 1550-1590 (Ideas in Context; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1992], 2002), 40-45, 53-56.


33 Sprunger, Dutch Puritanism, 29. Burrage dates the moment of covenaning around spring 1581, just a few months before embarkation (see The Story of Robert Browne, 13). Smith almost seems to hint at the absence of Browne (still being in prison) when the group covenanted, see Smith, “Robert Browne, Independent,” 300-301.


35 Cf. Burrage, The Story of Robert Browne, 16; and Powicke, Robert Browne, 30-32. It has been suggested that Browne first joined the church of Cartwright (see Albert Peel, The Brownists in Norwich and Norfolk about 1580 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920], 17; Erik Routley, English Religious Dissent [English Institutions; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960], 54; and Paas, De gemeenschap der heiligen, 125). However, Keith Sprunger argues convincingly that Browne arrived earlier (late 1581 or early 1582) than Cartwright, who is still reported to be in Antwerp on 2 September 1582. The first reference to Browne’s presence in Middelburg is 22 August 1582 (cf. Sprunger,
Middelburg was, back then, an important city in the Netherlands, being counted among its biggest harbors, and since 19 February 1574 under protection of the shaky government of William of Orange (‘the Silent’). Only two years earlier, on the 23 of January 1579, the collaborating Dutch provinces under the leadership of Orange joined in the Union of Utrecht, guaranteeing religious freedom within their region. Why Browne and his group choose Middelburg is unknown. Browne’s only remark is that other options, such as Scotland, the English Channel Islands Jersey and Guernsey, did not qualify since their churches were too much corrupted by the influence of England. Some suggest the presence of the ‘free press’ of printer Richard Schilder(s), who was well known for his Puritan convictions. Another, and mostly overlooked, reason might be the Synod of Middelburg, held there June 1581. A synod which brought representatives of many reformed churches together, not only from the Low Countries, but also from England (London, Sandwich, and Canterbury) and Germany (Cologne). An important item on the agenda was—not insignificantly—the drafting of a new church order (Corpus Disciplinae) which redefined the separate responsibilities of church and state. As such, Middelburg may have represented to Browne a ‘safe heaven’ for his own developing thoughts upon an independent church.

Important for this study is also the relocation of the Antwerp Merchant Adventurers (at this time ministered by Thomas Cartwright), to Middelburg just within

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*Dutch Puritanism, 22.* Albert Peel and Leland Carlson report that Cartwright and the Merchant Adventurers moved to Middelburg in October 1582 (see Cartwrightiana [London: George Allen and Unwin, 1953], 48).

36 See R.H. Bremmer, *Reformatie en rebellie: Willem van Oranje, de calvinisten en het recht van opstand: Tien onstuimige jaren: 1572-1581* (Franeker: Uitgeverij T. Wever, 1984), 40-41, 84-85, 166-170. It should be noted that on 26 July 1581 a declaration of independence (‘Plakkaat van Verlatinge’) was drawn, in which the Spanish king Philip II was abjured by the collaborating Dutch states who pronounced their independence. Hence, Browne arrived in Middelburg in a period known as the ‘Dutch Revolt’. The city of Middelburg, like other Pro-Orange cities, faced an immediate threat from the armies of the Duke of Parma, who’s armies were marching into southern provinces bordering France in 1581, eventually conquering Dunkirk and Nieuwpoort in 1583, and Brussels and Antwerp in 1584. See H.L. Zwitzer, “The Eighty Years War,” in *Exercise of Arms, 34*; Van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt, 45-59;* and K.W. Swart, *William of Orange and the Revolt of the Netherlands: 1572-1584* (St Andrews Studies in Reformation History; Ashgate, 2003). A comment has to be made about the calendar differences between England and the continent after 1582. Where most of Europe adopted the Gregorian calendar initiated by pope Gregory XIII, Elizabethan England kept following the Julian Calendar due to its opposition to the papacy, see for example A.N. Wilson, *The Elizabethans* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 220-221.


38 See Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 423-424.


41 See Van ’t Spijker, “De synode van Middelburg 1581,” 111. Considering the substance of this Synod, it is remarkable that precisely the reformed church in Norwich declined to be present and disapproved its substance. According to Van Schelven, Browne might have a hand in their decision ("Engelsch Vroeg-Independentisme en Hollandsch Anabaptisme," 87-89), yet this suggestion is highly speculative.
a few months after the arrival of Browne’s church. Not much is known about the communication between either groups, though it is certain that they did not merge. Browne’s group, deficient of an official meetinghouse, was forced to gather in his private house. How these fresh immigrants proved themselves with the basic necessities is unknown. What we do know is that their approximate two-year stay in Middelburg turned into a huge disappointment: disagreements between Browne and Harrison over a possible return to England, possible ill health, and ongoing strife, drove the impoverished group to the edge of fracture. In the center of their mutual tensions was a quarrel over Browne’s alleged judgment of his wife Alice Allen, whom he married some time before their flight, but who did not join them to Middelburg. This

42 The Merchant Adventurers were English tradesmen, chiefly trading in woolen cloth, and were located through this time in different seaports of Europe—such as Calais, Brugge, Antwerp, Middelburg, Delft. Especially the trade with the Southern Netherlands gave a boost to the wool exports in the first half of the sixteenth century (cf. Sharpe, “Economy and Society,” 31). After the Henrician Reformation, they followed the path of radical Protestantism, eventually joining Puritanism under Elizabeth’s reign. Initially the Merchant Adventurers church was permitted to secretly exercise their religion by the Spanish governors, but their Puritan zeal did not allow them to keep their ideas for themselves. They left Antwerp during the raids of Spanish mercenaries (“Spanish Fury”) in 1576 for Brugge, but returned soon after, where they developed to a fully Puritan church along Presbyterian lines. Yet in 1582 the Merchant Adventurers moved their business to Middelburg, and the church moved along with them, where it stayed until 1621. See further C. te Lintum, *De Merchant Adventurers in de Nederlanden: Een bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van den Engelsche handel met Nederland* (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1905), 63-74; Thomas Stuart Willan, *Studies in Elizabethan Foreign Trade* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1959), 34-64; and Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism, 14-29; Van ’t Spijker, Bisschop, and op ’t Hof, Het puritanisme, 275-278; and Scott Culpepper, Francis Johnson and the Separatist Influence: The Bishop of Brownism’s Life, Writings, and Controversies* (Macon: Mercer University 2011), 40.

43 This is reported in a letter from one Richard Godard, an officer of the Merchant Adventurers, see George, *John Robinson and the Separatist Tradition*, 39.

44 Cf. Smith, “Robert Browne, Independent,” 299. Smith leaves open whether he married in Norwich, or in Middelburg. Yet, since it is most likely that Alice Allen stayed in England, Browne must have married her there.

45 See Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 425. There is some mystery and disagreement about the identity of “Sister Allens,” as she is called. The impact of the disturbance around her person seemingly had a significant impact, since George Johnson (Francis Johnson’s brother) makes reference to this event in the midst of a similar event pertaining his brother’s wife (cf. Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism, 31*). Timothy George identifies her as Harrison’s wife (see John Robinson, 39), while others think her to be Browne’s wife Alice Allen (Reason, *Robert Browne*, 11). Dwight Smith suggest the possibility that both Browne and Harrison married two sisters of a certain John Allen, who was among the subscribers of the 1580-petition (cf. “Robert Browne, Independent,” 298-299). Smith’s option still leaves the question open, to whom this particular ‘Sister Allen’ was married. If indeed Browne’s wife, it would certainly be a striking resemblance to the conflict regarding Francis Johnson’s spouse, of which his brother George Johnson made account (see Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism, 31; and Culpepper, Francis Johnson, 130-133*). However, from a passage in Richard Bancroft’s treatise against the Puritans (“some having forsaken their wives,” Bancroft *Certen Slaunberous Speeches Against the Church of Engelande by the Precisians,” 88-89), it is conceivable that Browne’s wife may have stayed in England (contra Powicke, *Robert Browne*, 39) when he left for Middelburg. Bancroft furthermore writes, in reference to this situation, that “Harrisons sister was condemned by Browne for a reprobate” (“Certen Slaunberous Speeches,” 89). This would suggest that the mentioned ‘Sister Allen’ was indeed Harrison’s biological sister and possibly also Browne’s wife. Furthermore, if she did indeed stayed in England, this would fit Browne’s report. In his autobiography, Browne narrates how he was unjustly accused for dishonoring his ‘Sister Allens’, and later in his account, he mentions that “for his wife there was much a doe, & for the power & authoritie which the Husband hath over the Wife” (see Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 425-428). A last argument that points in this direction is the fact that Alice did not accompany Browne to Scotland, since it is known that she presented their first child Joan for baptism in the church of All Saints in Stamford on 8 February 1584 (cf.
‘condemnation’ seemingly did not fare well with Alice’ brother Harrison, and the latter accused Browne of “certaine tales & slanders.”46 The subsequent turmoil caused Browne to be three times deposed of his office as pastor, and even a temporal removal out of his own home. Browne entrusted the details of these disputes to paper in his autobiographical A Short and True Declaration, just before or after his departure from Holland. Besides internal conflicts, the group also met difficulties in relation to the Dutch population.47 The story of the Brownist group in Middelburg shows the fragile harmony of a marginal and isolated congregation. Despite all these setbacks and tragedy, Browne still managed to write three of his most important works. A trilogy which was soon introduced into England, and found willing readers. The printing and smuggling of these illegal books allowed Separatists like Browne, though small in number, “to exert and influence disproportionate to their numbers.”48 Not everyone was thrilled by Browne’s Separatist ideas and strong repercussions followed from the authorities. In June 1583, a year after publication, two men named Ellias Thacker and John Coppin were hanged for distributing Browne’s writings at Bury St. Edmunds.49

After the disbanding of the church at Middelburg, Browne went to Scotland, maybe in the company of only four or five families, and arrived in Edinburgh on 9 January 1584.50 The rest of the congregation remained in Middelburg, where Harrison died only a few years later, around 1585. It is doubtful if the small group under the leadership of Harrison joined Cartwright’s congregation as suggested by Frederick Powicke.51 Sprunger, in his version, refers to some discussion in the Walcheren Classis and the synod of Zeeland about Brownism in 1602, and concludes that eventually, “whether from apostacy, schism, or merely natural attrition, the Middelburg Separatists disappeared.”52 The disappearance of English Separatism in Middelburg may have happened even earlier. Francis Johnson, a Puritan who became interested in the Separatist cause in about October 1591,53 had to travel from Middelburg to London to

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47 Cf. Sprunger, Dutch Puritanism, 33. This is earlier contradicted by Smith, who held that Browne’s group “nevertheless seemed to have made numerous friends in Middleburgh.” Smith, “Robert Browne, Independent,” 304.
49 Cf. Powicke, Robert Browne, 66-67; and Albert Peel, The Noble Army of Congregational Martyrs (London: Independent Press, 1948), 30-32. Smith (following William Pierce, John Penny, His Life, Times, and Writing [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1923], 322) suggests that Thacker and Coppin were among Browne’s students during his years as a teacher (“Robert Browne, Independent,” 293, 309). The primary accusation against Thacker and Coppin seems to be the denial of the queen’s supremacy in matters of religion. The event was followed by a special proclamation (dated on 30 June 1583) of the queen herself denouncing the ideas as brought forward in the tracts of Robert Browne and Robert Harrison. For the text of this proclamation, see Peel and Carlson, The Writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Browne, 538-539.
50 See Sprunger, Dutch Puritanism, 25, 31, 33; and Powicke, Robert Browne, 36-37
51 See Powicke, Robert Browne, 68.
52 Sprunger, Dutch Puritanism, 34.
speak to Henry Barrow. Johnson's journey to London is a strong indication that there were no Separatists left in Middelburg to enquire. Curiously, Scot Culpepper in his recent study of Johnson and English Separatism, seems to be totally ignorant of Harrison's untimely death in 1585, and suggests that the Brownist group continued to exist in Middelburg until 1590. Culpepper's primary argument is the fact that Henry Barrow managed from prison to have some books published in Middelburg.

In Edinburgh, Browne quickly came in conflict with the Scottish Presbyterians over the issue of church discipline, which again resulted in his imprisonment. After his release he traveled around and visited several towns, possibly to find likeminded people. However, he did not find what he was looking for, and from frustration he eventually withdrew to England somewhere in the summer of 1584. He shortly reunited with his wife, possibly spent some time in prison, and eventually left again. Powicke suggests Browne returned to Middelburg or went to London. It is difficult to establish Browne's whereabouts with certainty at this point of time. The picture that emerges is that of a hunted man, living in constant danger, kept away from his family, either forced to hide or put in prison. It should not be forgotten that in June 1584 the Dutch prince, William of Orange, was assassinated. An event that strengthened the conviction in the whole of Western-Europe of the existence of an “international Papal-Catholic conspiracy,” which of course increased resolute action against all forms of nonconformity. If he had indeed spent a second stay in Middelburg, it might have brought him into the position to obtain a copy of Thomas Cartwright's letter to Robert Harrison, written in late 1584. The substance of this letter motivated him to write an immediate response to Cartwright, a reply which eventually led to his fall. Against his expressive will a copy of his letter to Cartwright came into the hands of Archbishop John Whitgift, an exponent of the conservative turn within the English Church, who earlier had a hand in Cartwright's

54 Cf. Sprunger, Dutch Puritanism, 33.
55 See Culpepper, Francis Johnson and the Separatist Influence, 41-46, 56.
56 “in Scotland, the praching hauing no names of byshops did imprison me more wrongfully then anie Bishop would haue done”. Robert Browne “An Aunswer to Mr. Flowers Letter,” in The Writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Browne, 519.
57 “I can testifie by trial of Scotland, which haue traueled it ouer in their best reformed places, as in Donde, S Andrews, Edenborowe & sundrie other Townes”. Browne “An Aunswer to Mr. Flowers Letter,” 519.
59 Smith, “Robert Browne, Independent,” 314. Powicke assumes that Browne was imprisoned several times (Cf. Robert Browne, 40), to meet Browne’s words: “I have bene in more then twenty prisons”. Browne “An Aunswer to Mr. Flowers Letter,” 519.
60 Collinson, Richard Bancroft and Elizabethan Anti-Puritanism, 44.
61 See Daniel Eppley, “Defender of the Peace: John Whitgift's Proactive Defense of the Polity of the Church of England in the Admonition Controversy,” AEH 68, no. 3 (1999): 312-335; and Diarmaid MacCulloch, The Later Reformation in England, 1547-1603, second edition (British History in Perspective; Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 38-42. This conservative generation of protestant bishops accepted the remaining Catholic structural form of the Church of England and rejected the view that it formed an obstacle for further reformation. Whitgift tried to navigate Elizabeth's via media and strongly opposed both the reemerging Roman Catholicism and the Puritan wing.
dismissal from Cambridge University. Whitgift, possibly with the aid of Lord Burghley, confronted Browne with a final ultimatum of recantation.\(^{62}\) Robert Browne—now downhearted by multiple imprisonment, bad health, and without any patronage—bows before this display of power, and signs the presented document on 7 October 1585. The condition in which he signed his recantation is later recounted in the closing words of Browne’s letter to his uncle ‘mr. Flowers’ in 1588: “For I am pore enough & broken too much with former troubles, & therefore had no need of further affliction.”\(^{63}\) Smith, in his analysis of these events, also brings up the ambiguous influence of Lord Burghley, both acting as patron and enforcer: “Whereas it is not likely that Browne would have made submission either on his own initiative, or in response to Whitgift’s authority, the terms of submission are typical of the kind of diplomatic compromise at which Lord Burghley was a past master.”\(^{64}\) Though Browne’s later developments fall outside the scope of this research, since this study is engaged with a study of his Separatist literature, it is doubtful if he did in fact reconcile himself fully with the English church. There are some indications that he only conformed for mere appearances sake. One ardent critic, Stephen Bredwell, accused Browne in a treatise named \textit{The Rasing of Brownism} (1587) of organizing secret gatherings, and making persistent attempts to convert people to Separatism. It is true, as Smith concedes, that the recantation left Browne with the possibility to have his Separatist convictions privately, since it only forced him to refrain from public utterances. Anyhow, Browne lived for the many years in at least outward conformity. He gained a Master’s position in St. Olave’s School in Southwark, and eventually received ecclesial orders in Achurch-cum-Thorpe in 1591, again through intercession of his patron Lord Burghley.\(^{65}\) Yet the tides were turning again with the rise of the Laudians in as much as he was excommunicated in 1631, after again a tumultuous episode in which he was charged with nonconformity.\(^{66}\) Old and weakened, Robert

\(^{62}\) The text of the recantation was included in Stephen Bredwell’s \textit{Rasing of the Foundations of Brownisme} 1588) of which fragments are published in the edited volume of Peel and Carlson. It appears that Browne was to accept five articles: 1. I do humbly submit my self to be at my Lord of Cant. Commandēt, whose authority vnder her Ma. I wil neuer resist nor depraue, by the grace of God. 2. [I acknowledge that] where the word of God is duly preached, and the sacraments accordingly ministred, there is the Church of God. 3. [I acknowledge that] the Church of England to be the church of Christ, or the church of God and promise to communicate with the same in praiers, sacramēts, & hearing of the word and to frequent [the] Churches according to law. 4. [I promise] quietly to behaue myselfe, and to keepe the peace of this church: and not to preach nor exercise the ministrie, vnlesse lawfully called thereunto. 5. I refuse not to communicate in the Sacraments. For I haue one childe that is alreadie baptized, according to the order and law, and by this time in mine absence, if God haue giuen my wife a safe deliuerance, and the childe doe liue, I suppose it is also baptized in like maner. Further, my seruants being three, doe orderly come to their owne Parish Church, according to the lawe and communicate also according to the Lawe.” Peel and Carlson, \textit{The Writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Browne}, 507-508.

\(^{63}\) Browne “An Aunswer to Mr. Flowers Letter,” 529. As also noted by Smith, “Robert Browne, Independent,” 314.

\(^{64}\) Smith, “Robert Browne, Independent,” 315.


\(^{66}\) See Smith, “Robert Browne, Independent,” 320. Smith corrected the earlier date of 1586, as suggested by Dexter (\textit{The Congregationalism of the Last Three Hundred Years}, 80-81), or 1616-1626 (due to hospitalization for insanity) as suggested by Burrage (see \textit{True Story of Robert Browne}, 43-44).
Browne died at an advanced age in October 1633, quite possibly in a jail in Northampton for hitting a tax collector, after which he was buried in the courtyard located thereby.67

As can be observed, the story of Robert Browne’s life has been closely studied so far as possible on the basis of available information. It shows a vivid image of the hardships and controversy that surrounds Robert Browne as the leader of the English Separatist movement in the second half of the sixteenth century. The infamous vigor with which he stood up for his cause, combined with his sudden recantation, and the obscurity that marks the rest of his life, gained him the reputation of the unstable radical that appears in secondary literature to this day. It would, however, be short-sighted to simply accept this image, since our account also revealed emphatically how Browne was opposed by church and state authorities, and the suffering he had to endure as a result. Moreover, our reading has shown a remarkable closeness between Browne’s ecclesiological developments and the Cambridge Presbyterians, notably Thomas Cartwright and Richard Greenham, in whose schooling he came to his convictions, and with whom his ideas are correspondent and concomitant. It would be worthwhile, in view of our intended analysis of Browne’s literature, to have a better understanding of the degree of affiliation between him and nonconformity at Cambridge. The rest of this chapter will, therefore, provide a more elaborate exploration of the events surrounding Cambridge University in the course of the sixteenth century, especially the period of the 1570-1580, in which Browne developed his ideas of church and ministry and wrote his literature.

2.3. Reformation and Nonconformity at Cambridge University
In the previous section we have established Browne’s historical context and observed a close connection between his biography and the nonconformity which originated at Cambridge University. In the sixteenth century the universities of Cambridge and Oxford were the only places of clerical education available within the Church of England, and not coincidentally the most influential centers of religious change.68 It was at Cambridge where Erasmus was invited to introduce his biblical humanism, where Luther’s literature was studied, where Martin Bucer received a chair in divinity, and where the Presbyterians under leadership of Cartwright had their stronghold in the 1570’s. In recent years the preeminence of Cambridge over Oxford, as main center of progressive Protestantism, has been nuanced.69 For Cambridge did not only produced ardent Puritans but also persistent anti-Puritans, such as the aforementioned Richard Bancroft. Likewise, Oxford brought forth prominent Puritans, like Thomas Wilcox and John Field, who wrote the

68 Cf. “Oxford and Cambridge were not merely microcosms where debates echoed what went on in the larger world beyond college walls. They supplied that world with ideas and men; they were testing grounds where orthodoxy and dissent met in conflict.” Thompson, Universities in Tudor England, 18.
Presbyterian pamphlet *An Admonition to Parliament*.\(^70\) Furthermore Robert Dudley (1532-1588), earl of Leicester and considered the ‘patron of Puritans’ who also protected Thomas Cartwright during the 1580’s, was Oxford’s Chancellor from 1564 to 1588.\(^71\) The fact remains however, that many Puritans did receive their education at Cambridge, and it was Cambridge where the conflict between inpatient Protestants and nostalgic ‘Catholics’ was most intense. Patrick Collinson states: “Cambridge was where the religious future of Elizabethan England was being made.”\(^72\)

In the following section I will provide a closer look at some major figures, developments, and controversies at Cambridge University during the Reformation era, in order to understand the intellectual and theological atmosphere in which Browne was educated. Especially those aspects which bear upon theology of ministry. In the last paragraph, I will draw some conclusions that will help us locate Browne’s literature within the theological debates of his time.

### 2.3.1. Erasmus, Luther and Bucer

The influential role of Cambridge’s university in the reformation of the English church goes back to the early reign of Henry VIII (1509-1547). Like elsewhere in Europe, Cambridge was founded in Medieval times as an association of several scholars or Fellows engaged in teaching and learning the seven arts (*artes*). In the early sixteenth century, Cambridge consisted of 10 colleges, whose heads or masters ruled their particular college.\(^73\) Together with the resident Doctors, they elected the highest officer, the university’s Chancellor, whose power extended well beyond the university, including the city and its tradesmen. In day to day affairs, the Vice-Chancellor, a one-year function by a resident academician, ruled the university. Only quite recently, in 1992, the Vice-Chancellery became a full-time function changing only every 7 years. Foundational for the height of Cambridge in the sixteenth century was the life and work of John Fisher, who was named the first Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity,\(^74\) and later served as Chancellor, an occupation in which he laid the basis for the developments during the sixteenth century. On his invitation Erasmus of Rotterdam visited Cambridge (1511-

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72 Collinson, Richard Bancroft and Elizabethan Anti-Puritanism, 17; also Seaver, *The Puritan Lectureships*, 82.
1514, possibly even since 1506), to lecture in Greek. Erasmus also introduced to Cambridge an academic program which stressed the humanities of Greek and Latin and thereby significantly advanced the study of the Biblical scriptures, which laid the basis for a new learning. At the same time his acid criticism toward the late medieval Roman Catholic Church, as for example found in the *Praise of Folly* (1511) and in the *Colloquies* (1518), created an image of Catholicism and its clergy, that determined the Protestant perspective well into the Elizabethan and Jacobean era.

In the same period the first effects of the Continental Reformation were visible in the developing minds of men like William Tyndale, Thomas Cranmer and Hugh Latimer. Together they formed, what H.C. Porter calls, “the central core of the evangelical group of Cambridge dons in the 1520s,” reading and debating the works of Martin Luther, also known as the illustrious ‘White Horse Inn group’ or ‘Little Germany’. In these days Lutheran influence was officially strongly opposed and considered heresy. For example, King Henry VIII himself was awarded the title *defensor fidei* for his apology (*Assertio Septem Sacramentorum*, 1521) against the 95 theses of Luther, which he dedicated to pope Leo X. To no avail, however, for 13 years later Henry used existing English law (*praemunire*) to remove the authority of the pope from the English churches, and had himself named ‘Supreme Head’ by the Act of Supremacy in 1534. Thereby his possessions included—besides monasteries, chapels and chantries—also the university’s colleges. The future of Cambridge, henceforth, lay in the hands of the crown itself and this change rapidly paved the way for the new learning, once introduced by Erasmus. With Thomas Cromwell’s rise to the Chancellorship in 1535, new Injunctions were issued which demanded “that all divinity lectures should be upon the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, according to the true sense thereof, and not after the manner of Scotus,

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75 For Erasmus’ time in Cambridge, see Porter, *Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge*, 21-40.
80 Cf. “This preparatory change of atmosphere is often loosely called the ‘New Learning’ and in its origins owes much to the abandoned scholastic philosophy and theology in favour of literary, historical and philological studies.” Dickens, *The English Reformation*, 88; and Loewe, “Cambridge’s Collegiate Crisis,” 153-161.
etc.” Heavily influenced by Erasmian biblical humanism and Lutheran thought, the traditional curriculum was adapted to fit the theological priority of Scriptural exegesis. Instead of Canon Law and scholastic authors, notably the Sentences (c. 1150) of Peter Lombard, Greek and Hebrew became daily activities, and students were encouraged to read Scripture for themselves.

Edward’s reign (1547-1554) brought further momentum to the Protestant turn within the English church. On Thomas Cranmer’s invitation, the prominent theologian Martin Bucer arrived in Cambridge in 1549, together with Paul Fagius who would take up the chair in Hebrew but died soon, in the same year of his arrival. He had left behind the chaotic and disruptive climate of Strasbourg due to the Interim, imposed by the Roman Catholic emperor Charles V. By the time Bucer was offered the Lady Margaret Chair in Divinity by Cranmer, with whom he had been in contact since 1538, his works were widely dispersed. Bucer’s invitation was another attempt to improve the educational standards of ministers and provide them with thorough biblical training, after the example of the Continental Protestant Reformation. Rosemary O’Day, in her study of the English clerics in the sixteenth century, underlines the relation between the new learning and the altering role of the parochial clergy, which changed from a mediating priesthood to a pastoral or preaching ministry. While preaching already occurred within the English church prior to Reformation times, Protestants—especially motivated by Romans 10:14 (‘faith comes by hearing,’ Lt. fides ex auditu)—restructured ordained ministry primarily around the duty of preaching salvation. If these changes were indeed...
as thoroughgoing as sometimes assumed is questionable. Bucer for example, regretted the continuing presence of tutors with papist convictions at Cambridge.\textsuperscript{87} A downside that parallels Bucer’s main critique of the progress of reformation in England, which was the weakness of the evangelical ministry and especially of preaching.\textsuperscript{88} According to Scott Amos, Bucer’s stress upon a learned ministry should be explained by his conviction that reformation was not a case of violent coercion, but of persuasion by right preaching.\textsuperscript{89}

Although Bucer’s stay was short-lived, due to his untimely death in March 1551,\textsuperscript{90} his influence should not be underestimated.\textsuperscript{91} Bucer’s influence upon Cambridge University is one of the factors that explains how Cambridge University became a hotspot of reformist activity.\textsuperscript{92} For example, in 1557 Queen Mary still considered it worthwhile to let Bucer posthumously be marked a heretic, and ordered his corps to be exhumed and burned in the marketplace together with all his books. A gruesome act, which was reversed by Bucer’s rehabilitation during Elizabeth’s reign in July 1560.\textsuperscript{93} Ian Hazlett gives an indication of Bucer’s enduring influence by pointing to his friendship with Thomas Cranmer, his involvement with the new edition of the \textit{Book of Common Prayer}, his influence upon William Cecil (who attended his lectures), and upon future Archbishop Edmund Grindal, whom Hazlett considers Bucer’s premier disciple.\textsuperscript{94}


\textsuperscript{88} N. Scott Amos, “‘It is Fallow Ground Here’: Martin Bucer as Critic of the English Reformation,” \textit{WTJ} 61 no. 1 (1999): 42.

\textsuperscript{89} See Amos, “‘It is Fallow Ground Here’,” 48. For the involvement of Martin Bucer in the vestment debate between Nicholas Ridley and John Hooper, see John H. Primus, \textit{The Vestments Controversy: An Historical Study of the Earliest Tensions Within the Church of England in the Reigns of Edward VI and Elizabeth} (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1960), 43-55.

\textsuperscript{90} See Porter, \textit{Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge}, 53-54. Although Bucer’s time in Cambridge was relatively quiet, he lived in poverty, though his professorship earned him a salary three times larger than that of his predecessor. The last letter he wrote, addressed to Matthew Parker—then Master of Corpus Christi—was a supplication for a loan. After his death his widow wrote a similar letter to Thomas Cranmer. See for Bucer’s time in England, Basil Hall, “Martin Bucer in England,” in \textit{Martin Bucer: Reforming Church and Community}, ed. David F. Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1994]), 2002), 144-160; Amos, “‘It is Fallow Ground Here’”, 41-52; and Martin Greschat, \textit{Martin Bucer: A Reformer and his Times}, trans. Stephen E. Buckwalter (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 227-249.


\textsuperscript{92} See Porter, \textit{Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge}, 190-192.

\textsuperscript{93} Cf. Greschat, \textit{Martin Bucer}, 249.

\textsuperscript{94} W. Ian P. Hazlett, \textit{The Reformation in Britain and Ireland: An Introduction} (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2003), 45-47, 59, 70.
Hazlett also mentions the publication of Bucer’s *De Regno Christi* in 1551, the same year of his death. It contained his vision for the further reformation of the English church and English society. Central in this document is the staunch rejection of papal authority and the affirmation and justification of royal supremacy over both the ecclesial (*corpus Christi*) and civil realm (*corpus Christianum*), after the example of emperor Constantine in the early 4th century. Bucer found his Biblical examples in David, Hezekiah, and Josiah, to ground a form of “Protestant caesaro-papism”, as Thomas Dandelet calls it, which remained an abiding source to defend the superiority of the English monarch in the course of the sixteenth century, particularly during the reigns of Elizabeth and James I. More recently, Scot Amos has drawn attention toward Bucer’s neglected ‘Lectures upon Ephesians’ that had been held at Cambridge and were published in 1562. His skills as humanist scholar and reformed theologian are said to have ‘electrified’ the audience. Amos writes, “it is arguably the case that Bucer’s impact can be attributed first to the fact that his lectures represented the longest presentation to date of evangelical doctrine by a Professor in a Cambridge lecture hall.” Interesting for us, is that these included an expose on the ‘sacred ministry’, based upon Ephesians 4:7-11. Though Willem van’t Spijker, in his analysis of Bucer’s theology of ministry, refers only sparingly to these lectures, it is clear that Bucer emphasized the role of the local church as the tangible reality of Christ’s body. It is the local church where the Word is preached, the sacraments are administered, and discipline is kept. Within this ‘community of saints’, Bucer recognized both the general ministry of spiritual gifts, as well as the special preaching ministry sent by Christ to exercise a public office. Van ’t Spijker describes Bucer’s theology of ministry as an example of a *via media* solution: “Bucer repeats in his commentary upon Ephesians: ‘It is a divine institution, the preaching of the Word. Although He by himself confers salvation to everyone, He still want to bind us together by the bond of love, and humble us under them, whom He appointed as servants in the

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96 Dandelet, “Creating a Protestant Constantine,” 541.
99 There is some debate over the question if Bucer ever finished his lectures upon the letter to the Ephesians before his death in February/March 1551. Amos argues that is plausible that Bucer lectured to the end of the fourth chapter (see Bucer, *Ephesians and Biblical Humanism*, 67-72). Willem van ’t Spijker thinks this section to be originally an ordination sermon, see Willem van ’t Spijker, *De ambten bij Martin Bucer* (Kampen: Uitgeverij Kok, 1987), 324.
100 See Amos, Bucer, *Ephesians and Biblical Humanism*, 129-132.
101 See Van ’t Spijker, *De ambten bij Martin Bucer*, 332-333; cf. “Bucer rejects an abstract idea of the church. It is made up of individuals, and just as a school is judged by its scholars and a city by its citizens, so the church is described in the light of its members.” Stephens, “The church in Bucer’s commentaries on the Epistle to the Ephesians,” 55.
102 See Van ’t Spijker, *De ambten bij Martin Bucer*, 341-343, 356.
church’. Ordained ministry ultimately originated in God. As such, writes Van ‘t Spijker, Bucer aimed to avoid both a “hierarchical structure” as well as a “spiritual evaporation” of ministry as he observed among Anabaptists. Instead, Bucer envisioned “a spiritual partnership of office and congregation”. It is remarkable, however, as Peter Stephens observes, that Bucer drops his earlier concept of the fourfold-ministry found in his commentary on Ephesians of 1527:

He speaks of three kinds of ministry, of doctrine, sacraments and discipline, and of temporary and permanent ministries. The offices of apostle, prophet, speaking with tongues, exorcism and healing are temporary, as the Lord did not impart them to the churches for all time. The offices of pastor, bishop, presbyter and deacon, however, are permanent and for every church.

Bucer clearly attempted to align his Reformed understanding of ministry with the English episcopal structure. In this way, Bucer familiarized Cambridge clergymen with a Biblical ecclesiology that understood the local parish as an actual church, as the place where Christ gathers and disciplines his saints, consisting of both ministers and members, to hear the word preached, partake of the sacraments, and share in the spiritual gifts.

In the pre-Marian years, Cambridge University slowly changed its curriculum toward a more Biblical orientated program of study. At the same time, Biblical humanism generated an intellectual atmosphere in which the church and its ministry were openly critiqued. A Reformed alternative arrived with Martin Bucer and his concessive theology of ministry that sought to combine royal supremacy and hierarchy with a local preaching ministry. For Bucer, Ephesians 4:11 showed how ordained ministry, as a divine institution and gift, was embedded within the local community, to strengthen the unity and holiness of the church, and avoid both spiritual elitism and uniformity.

103 “Bucer herhaalt het in zijn commentaar op Ephese: ‘Het is een goddelijke instelling, de prediking van het Woord. Hoewel Hij door zichzelf aan allen de zaligheid verleent, zo wil Hij ons toch door de band der liefe samenbinden, en ons veroortoemigen onder hen, die Hij in de gemeente tot dienaren aanstelde.’” Van ‘t Spijker, De ambten bij Martin Bucer, 348.

104 Cf. “Ook uit dit voorbeeld blijkt duidelijk, dat de vocatio ad Ecclesiae ministeria voor Bucer in feite zaak is van God zelf. Hij is de vocator primarius en Hij geeft zijn recht niet uit handen. Gezien in dit licht wordt de roeping waarmee de kerk roept, niet anders dan het herkennen van Gods roeping. Aan God is het vocare.” Van ’t Spijker, De ambten bij Martin Bucer, 368.

105 Van ’t Spijker, De ambten bij Martin Bucer, 348; also Stephens, “The church in Bucer’s commentaries on the Epistle to the Ephesians,” 51-52, 57-58. Stephens comments that the emphasis on the spiritual necessity of ministry is even stronger than in his earlier commentary on Ephesians. For a critique of this charge toward early Anabaptism, see John H. Yoder, Täufertum und Reformation im Gespräch: Dogmengeschichtliche Untersuchung der frühen Gespräche zwischen Schweizerischen Täufern und Reformatoren (BISHST, Bd. 13; Zürich: EVZ-Verlag, 1968), 109-111.


2.3.2. Calvin and English Calvinism

After Elizabeth’s ascension to the throne in 1558, most Cambridge colleges were still headed by Marian Masters and many Marian Fellows still occupied their positions. Though nationally the Elizabethan era signified a turn in Mary’s aspirations of a Roman restoration, its effects at Cambridge went apparently not so quick. Even a visitation of the queen herself, in July 1559, did not bring the clean-sweep which was hoped for by the more Protestant wing. Only small changes were made. For example, the aforementioned Edmund Grindal, James Pilkington, and Roger Kelke were admitted as Masters of respectively Pembroke College, St. John’s, and Magdalene College. They guaranteed Bucer’s continued influence well into the Elizabethan years. However, undergraduates at Cambridge now heard many sermons during a year, both in Latin and English. And, with the rising of educational standards, the growing numbers of university-trained clergymen during the 1560’s, changes penetrated to the parochial level as early as the 1570’s.

This new generation of Cambridge scholars orientated themselves strongly in Continental Reformed theology, typified as the ‘new writers’. In the 1560’s, continental authors, such as Calvin’s Institutes, Bullinger’s Decades, and Melanchthon’s Loci, were widely read among Cambridge students of theology. Evidence of particularly Calvin’s influence is clear from the vast amount of translations of his works. According to Andrew Pettegree, England was by far the largest market for Calvin’s writings in the later part of the sixteenth century. Certainly at the universities Calvin rapidly became a decisive influence and helped shape the aspirations of a reformed English church. Calvin’s Institutes, for instance, were translated by Thomas Cranmer’s son-in-law, Thomas Cranmer.

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110 See Porter, Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge, 105. It should be mentioned that Grindal, already within one week of his appointment at Pembroke, was elected as Bishop of London. His presence at Cambridge was therefore very minimal, and he resided his Mastership in May 1562.
113 Cf. Craig, “Erasmus or Calvin?”, 54-62; and more extensively Andrew Pettegree, “The Reception of Calvinism in Britain,” in Calvinus Sincerioris Religionis Vindex: Calvin as the Protector of the Purer Religion, eds. Wilhelm H. Neuser, and Brian G. Armstrong (SCE&S vol. 36; Kirsville: Truman State University, 1997), esp. 275-283. In the course of the sixteenth century many translations of continental writes became available. For example, the translation of Luther’s Sermon upon John xx. and the true use of the keys, Ochino’s Sermons, and Zwingli’s Certain precepts, were among others done by Richard Argentine, see E. Gordon Duff, The English Provincial Printers, Stationers and Bookbinders to 1557 (The Sandars Lectures; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), 106-107.
Norton, in 1560-1561.\footnote{See Ian Hazlett, “Calvin and the British Isles,” in The Calvin Handbook, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis, transl. Henry J. Baron, Judith J. Guder, Randi H. Lundell, and Gerrit W. Sheeres (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 123.} During the 1570’s many of Calvin’s other works were translated into English by prominent Presbyterians, among whom Thomas Wilcox, one of the writers of the Admonition to Parliament (§ 2.3.5.).\footnote{See De Boer, The Genevan School of the Prophets, 258-260.} The popularity of Calvinistic literature, conversely, was not limited to those who favored a Presbyterian reformation.\footnote{See extensively Peter Lake, “Calvinism and the English Church 1570-1635,” P&P 114 (1987): 32-76.} While Calvin’s reputation did not fare well with Elizabeth herself,\footnote{Calvin’s ill reputation with Queen Elizabeth was the result of his association with John Knox, the Scottish reformer, who had denied Elizabeth’s right to the English throne since she was female. See Hazlett, “Calvin and the British Isles,” 122-123; and Jane E. A. Dawson, “Knox, Goodman and the ‘Example of Geneva,” in The Reception of the Continental Reformation in Britain, 108-109, 123.} Calvinist theology was generally warmly received within the broader Church of England.\footnote{See Hoyle, Reformation and Religious Identity in Cambridge, 28-35. For a more extensive study of English Calvinism, the concept of predestination and the doctrine of faith, see R.T. Kendall, Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649 (Oxford Theological Monographs; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), esp. 13-28, 212-213. Kendall suggested that the difference between Calvin and Beza/Perkins should rather be typified as a ‘theological break’ than as theological elaboration. In recent years this ‘Kendall thesis’ has been largely corrected by Richard Muller, who re-emphasized the continuity between Calvin and his theological successors; see his After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition (Oxford Studies in Historical Theology; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 63-104; also Carl R. Trueman, “Calvin and Calvinists,” in The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin, 225-244; and Randall J. Pederson, Unity in Diversity: English Puritanism and the Puritan Reformation, 1603-1689 (BSCH, vol. 68; Leiden: Brill, 2014), esp. 265-267.} The popularity of Calvinistic literature, conversely, was not limited to those who favored a Presbyterian reformation.\footnote{Collinson, Richard Bancroft and Elizabethan Anti-Puritanism, 221; also Peter Marshall, “(Re)defining the English Reformation,” JBS 48, no. 3 (2009): 579. It should be mentioned that Collinson here somewhat contradicts an earlier comment: “we know now that ‘Calvinism’ no longer serves the purposes of serious ecclesiastical historians. It has neither theological nor historical substance and coherence.” See his “The Fog in the Channel Clears: The Rediscovery of the Continental Dimension to the British Reformations,” in The Reception of the Continental Reformation in Britain, xxxiii.} Still, the reception of Reformed theology went according to a group of Cambridge Puritans not far enough. They admired Calvin’s ecclesiological reformations and considered Geneva an example of a true Protestant church faithful to the Apostles’ testimony. “A benchmark for protestant ministry and church discipline,” writes David Hoyle in his study of religious reformation in Cambridge.\footnote{Hoyle, Reformation and Religious Identity in Cambridge, 28.} In his extensive study of sixteenth-century English literature, C.S. Lewis describes the attraction towards Genevan theology among the young dons in terms of attractive innovation: “fashionableness. . . the creed of progressives, even of revolutionaries.”\footnote{C.S. Lewis, English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama (The Oxford History of English Literature, vol. 3; Oxford: Clarendon Press, [1944], 1962), 43.} While certainly not intended as such, the Ecclesiastical Ordinances of 1541/1561 (Les Ordonnances Ecclésiastiques de l’Eglise de Genève), represented a ecclesiological revolution by its introduction of the dual and equal pastorate of pastors and teachers (‘Doctores’), supported by a governing body
of elders.123 In his Institutes Calvin continued the direction of Bucer and structured his theology of ministry along the lines of his key-text Ephesians 4:11, and also recognized only the last two mentioned ministries as ‘permanent offices’ (munera ordinaria) in the church of Christ: “He instituted ‘pastors and teachers’ (Eph. 4:11) through whose lips he might teach his own.”124 These were complemented with the ‘elders’ and (anciens) ‘deacons’ (diacres). Different from Martin Luther before him, Calvin was influenced by Bucer and stressed the importance of the visible church as the ‘mother’ of believers (communio sanctorum et fidelium).125 Correspondingly, Calvin’s theology of ministry too, is largely an attempt to find a middle way between Roman-Catholic hierarchical and sacerdotal priesthood and Anabaptist ‘spiritualism’. On the one hand he tempered all ambitious aspirations and depicted the ordained minister as a service (munus, ministerium), not a priesthood (sacerdotium), to the local church: “But when a puny man risen from the dust speaks in God’s name, at this point we best evidence our piety and obedience toward God if we show ourselves teachable toward his minister, although he excels us in nothing.”126 Central in Calvin’s argument is an ordained ministry that does not embody a hierarchical order above the local congregation, but rather has its place within the local community. However, as appears evidently from the Institutes, ordained ministry remained divinely ordained (an ‘ordo’), a gracious gift (cf. Eph. 4:11) of God to accommodate himself to his people, and as an external instrument to sustain true faith.127 Since ordained ministry stands in function of faithful preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments, ordination by the laying on of hands was required as a symbol of the ordinand’s servanthood.128 Calvin even acknowledged a certain Christological representation, suggests Eduardus van der Borght.129 Calvin’s ‘high’


124 John Calvin, Inst. IV, 1, 1; cf. George Yule, “Calvin’s View of the Ministry of the Church,” in Ministry: Clerical and Lay, eds. W.J. Sheils and Diana Wood (Studies in Church History, vol. 26; Oxford: Ecclesiastical History Society, 1989), 172; and Van der Borght, Theology of Ministry, 65-70. Van der Borght admits that Calvin’s exegesis of Ephesians 4:11 is comparatively weak with regard to his extensive systematic use of this text. Still, though based on a rather ‘thin’ exegesis, he did not depart from the exegetical tradition of his day.

125 See Calvin, Inst. IV, 1, 3-4; cf. Willem Balke, Omgang met de reformatoren (Kampen: De Groot Goudriaan, 1992), 123: “Zo profiteert Calvijn een ecclesiologie die verregaand een theologie van de plaatselijke gemeente is, die als zodanig een volwaardige kerk van God is.” For Bucer’s influence on Calvin, see Willem van ’t Spijker, “Bucer’s influence on Calvin: church and community,” in Martin Bucer: Reforming Church and Community, 32-44.

126 Calvin, Inst. IV, 3, 1.

127 See Calvin, Inst. IV, 1, 4; and Van der Borght, Theology of Ministry, esp. 55-56. For Calvin’s concept of accommodation, see Arnold Huijgen, Divine Accommodation in John Calvin’s Theology: Analysis and Assessment (RHT, Bd. 16; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011).

128 See Van der Borght, Theology of Ministry, 76-77.

129 Cf. Van der Borght, Theology of Ministry, 55-56.
appreciation of ordained ministry cannot be separated from his antipathy toward the Anabaptists, who in his eyes neglected the visible church and the divine institution of ordained ministry.\(^{130}\) This is particularly apparent in his changing view on the office of the prophet. While Calvin in his earlier work acknowledged the permanent character of the prophetic office (Eph. 4:11)—both in the sense of foretelling the future as the gift of interpreting Scripture with a contextual application\(^{131}\)—he somewhat changed his view in response to the Anabaptists. Accordingly, prophets became the equivalents of gifted Bible teachers.\(^{132}\) Besides a different ministerial structure, Geneva also introduced a significant change in the relationship between church and state. “Geneva represented their strict separation,” asserts Christopher Ocker.\(^{133}\) Though both realms were dependent on each other (\textit{corpus Christianum}), church and the state nonetheless represented in Calvin’s view two different parts of God’s provision. Stronger than Bucer did, Calvin stressed their distinction.\(^{134}\) The church represents God’s instrument in the mediation of his salvation, and the state was only there to protect ‘outward religion’\(^{135}\) and thus had to leave discipline to the church to be exercised by the eldership.\(^{136}\) Though Calvin himself worked closely together with state authorities (‘Seigneury’), and Geneva functioned \textit{de facto} as a mere theocracy,\(^{137}\) it is significant that those officials who were appointed to eldership, were to take off their civil decorations when exercising their ecclesial office.\(^{138}\)

The reception of Calvin’s theology in Cambridge strengthened to a large part the legacy of Bucer in the Elizabethan era. Both theologians stressed the importance of the local and visible congregation, where Word and the sacraments are present and where discipline is maintained. Ordained ministry represents to Calvin a vital part of Christ’s rule as the messengers of his Word. Again, Ephesians 4:11 is used to determine a middle ground theology of ministry that seeks to compromise between hierarchical episcopacy and the Anabaptist negligence of the divinely ordained outward ministry. Significant,

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\(^{131}\) See Balke, \textit{Calvijn en de doperse radikalen}, 244-251; also Van der Borght, \textit{Theology of Ministry}, 61-62.


\(^{134}\) Cf. Van ‘t Spijker, “Bucer’s influence on Calvin: church and community,” 44.

\(^{135}\) See Calvin, \textit{Inst. IV}, 20, 2.

\(^{136}\) See Calvin, \textit{Inst. IV}, 12, 2.


\(^{138}\) See Van der Borght, \textit{Theology of Ministry}, 95.
however, is also Calvin’s more rigid distinction between church and state. Geneva exemplified a further reformation in which the Biblical warranty lay with the church itself.

### 2.3.3. The Vestments Controversy

Actual controversy started with a polemic over the priestly apparel in the 1560’s, which is now known as the ‘vestments controversy’. It was this controversy that first witnessed the appearance of ‘Puritans’ to typify the zealous Protestants who arose as a movement from this dispute. On 25 June 1565, Elizabeth directed Archbishop Matthew Parker to enforce the wearing of the priestly apparel as prescribed by the *Book of Common Prayer*. Parker’s subsequent efforts generated a widespread dispute whether vestments, such as the white linen surplice, belonged to the so-called ‘adiaphora’ (‘indifferent matters’), and if civil authorities could in fact enforce this by law. Nonconformists, among whom also James Pilkington, denied its indifference and contended that these vestments lacked Biblical warranty. Moreover, they considered them ‘leftovers’ of the Roman priesthood which created an unnecessary division between clergy and laity. ‘Conformists, on their turn, acknowledged the indifference and therefore claimed the right of the ‘Christian Prince’ to prescribe such practice. For nonconformists, however, such civil enforcement of religious uniformity equaled ‘tyranny’. This made the dispute over the priestly dress, on a deeper level, a debate about the limits of civil authority in ecclesial matters: “The Erastianism of Elizabethan Anglicanism was now nakedly revealed.”

At Cambridge, controversy started at St. John’s College with William Fulke, who preached a series of sermons in the summer and early autumn of 1565. Interestingly, Thomas Cartwright was then a fellow at St. John’s. In these sermons, Fulke strongly argued against the use of unleavened bread, the kneeling during the administration of the sacrament, the wearing of a surplice, and the use of vestments generally. During his fourth sermon even the Master of St. John’s, then Richard Longworth, received communion without wearing the surplice. Afterwards surplices disappeared quickly from the scene and non-conformity grew, along with a growing tension. Eventually Fulke’s nonconformity was met with serious attempts to reinforce uniformity. In 1566,

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Archbishop Matthew Parker issued strong repercussions in his *Advertisements* (1566). In response to the Parker’s enforcement of uniformity, a storm of protest raged in multiple publications. One of these outspoken nonconformists, one time a Cambridge scholar and a Marian exile, Anthony Gilby, writes in telling words:

These garments were the show of their blasphemous priesthood; herein they did sing and say their superstitious idolatrous service; they did cense their idols and help forward their idolatrous masses. What policy can it be then to wear this gear but a superstitious, wicked, and popish policy? . . . Our master, Christ’s policy, was expressed in one word: feed, feed, feed {John 21:15-17}; and the prophets before and the apostles afterward. If Christ be the wisdom of the Father, the true minister shall be well known by that one mark he giveth.

The conviction that lay behind the rejection of the garment was that ‘true ministry’ was characterized by edification of the church, according to John Primus’ elaborate study of a number of these pamphlets. For example, Robert Crowley who writes under particular reference to Ephesians 4:11-17, “that the power that God hath given to his Ministers, is given them that they should edifie or build up the Church of Christ, and not destroy it, or pull it downe.” Nonconformists therefore exchanged these ‘popish rags’ for the academic black gowns to emphasize Protestant learning over ceremonial superstition. Vestments were considered a distraction that would lead ‘simple Christians’ away from the preached Word and back into superstition. And since vestments were contrary to Scripture, there could be no authority, not even Queen Elizabeth, who could obligate such practice by law. For the authority of the ‘Christian Prince’ was restricted to temporal matters to safeguard true religion, and not mingle in ecclesial affairs. Part of this debate was also the disagreement over the legacy of Martin Bucer and his explanation of the letter to the Ephesians. Nonconformists argued on the basis of Bucer’s theology

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146 For more on Anthony Gilby, see Zlatar, *Reformation Fictions*, 143-146. According to Zlater, Gilby also corresponded with Presbyterian leaders Thomas Wilcox and John Field.


that Christ alone was the head of the church, while conformists said Bucer underwrote royal supremacy in indifferent matters.

In London, Parker’s Advertisements met with serious rebellion. About a third of the London clergy were suspended, most of whom ended up as lecturers or private chaplains. Other Puritan fractions organized private meetings to implement the Genevan church model, notably in Plumbers’ Hall and the ‘Privy Church’ of Richard Fitz. In this way, “the new coercive measures resulted in the emergence of what we may call circumstantial Separatists, that is, dissenters who, although Genevan in principle, broke away from the Church of England in order to worship separately, unhampered by any of the obnoxious vestments or ceremonies,” states Andrew Pearson. B.R. White has convincingly shown that these early semi-separations should be understood as a seedbed of Browne’s future full separation in the 1580’s. However, documentation of these ‘early Separatists’ is scarce. Fitz’s Privy Church is the only one of which some information regarding their theological motives remains. In a document The trewe markes of Christes church, &c. (c. 1569), Fitz, apparently ordained as its minister, lists a threefold characteristic:

Fyrste and formoste, the Glorious worde and Euangell preached, not in bondage and subjection, but freely, and purelye. Secondly to haue the Sacraments ministol purelym onely and all together according to the institution and good worde of the Lorde Iesus, without any tradicion or inuention of man. And laste of all to haue, not the fylthye Cannon lawe, but dissiplyne onelye, and all together

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151 Over the years there has been some confusion whether Fitz’ Privy Church and the Plumber’s Hall group are one and the same (cf. Frederick J. Powicke, “Lists of the Early Separatists,” CHST 1, no. 3 [1902]: 144-147), or two separate groups (cf. Champlin Burrage, The Early English Dissenters: In the Light of Recent Research (1550-1641), [2 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912], 1:82-86; and White, The English Separatist Tradition, 28-32). Burrage makes his differentiation to a large extent on the basis of his sharp differentiation between Puritanism and Separatism. As the Plumber’s Hall group was “composed of Puritans” and “did not truly separate from the Church of England” as did Fitz’s Privy Church (83). He writes, “the Plumber’s Hall congregation, as a whole, was in reality only an independent Puritan congregation modelled after the London Nonconformist congregation of Queen Mary’s days, which did not separate from the Church of England as a State Church but merely from Roman Catholicism in the Church.” (84). Subsequent authors have followed Burrage’s thesis. Collinson, for example, speaks of “‘circumstantial separatists” (The Elizabethan Puritan Movement, 89; 85-91, 131-136).

152 Andrew F. Scott Pearson, Thomas Cartwright and Elizabethan Puritanism 1535-1603 (Gloucester: Peter Smith, [1925], 1966), 19; also Collinson, The Elizabethan Separatist Movement, 84-92; and George, John Robinson and the Separatist Tradition, 23-32.

153 See B.R. White, The English Separatist Tradition: From Marian Martyrs to Pilgrim Fathers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 20-43; also Peel, The Noble Army of Congregational Martyrs, 23-29; and Alan P.F. Sell, Saints: Visible, Orderly & Catholic: The Congregational Idea of the Church (Geneva/Allison Park: The World Alliance of Reformed Churches/Pickwick Publications,), 10-13. Collinson earlier tempered the enthusiasm with which these early separatists are embraced as the “ultimate forebears” of modern free churches, due to the “blurred image that we have of these sects”. See his The Elizabethan Puritan Movement, 92.

154 See for the three available documents, Burrage, The Early English Dissenters, 2:13-17.
agreeable to the same heauenlye and almighty worde of oure good Lorde, Iesus Chryste.\textsuperscript{155}

While further records of ecclesiological justification are missing, the basic ingredients of a Presbyterian agenda are obviously present, notably undergirded by a firm appeal to Scripture as the sole warranty for ecclesial government.\textsuperscript{156} Thus, they gathered themselves, ordained their own ministers and appointed elders and deacons.\textsuperscript{157} All this to indicate that there existed, as B.R. White concludes, “a definite tradition of Separatism before Robert Browne.”\textsuperscript{158} In his study of English Separatism, White also refers to a document in the possession of Matthew Parker dated between 1571-1573, containing some sort of covenantal vow in order to be admitted to a separated church in London. Without mentioning the term ‘covenanting’ itself, it does contain the language which would be characteristic for future covenanted churches: “I have joined myself to the Church of Christ. Wherein I have yielded myself subject to the discipline of God’s Word.”\textsuperscript{159} In 1956, White argued on the basis of a similarity between an unsigned section under the title \textit{A View of Antichrist} printed in the Puritan anthology \textit{A parte of a register} in 1590, and a section in \textit{A True and Short Declaration} (see § 3.5.), a historical connection between the London Separatists and Browne.\textsuperscript{160} The included prayer bears a remarkable resemblance with a prayer attributed to Queen Elizabeth in 1571. White, with some caution, considers it a possibility that Browne met some of these London Separatists in the early 1570’s. It is not certain whether the Privy Church did envisage a permanent separation, but they did defend their separation on theological distinctives that resemble Genevan ecclesiology.\textsuperscript{161}

The vestments controversy in the 1560’s shows how the questions concerning the role and substance of ordained ministry were at the heart of the reformation in England. A debate which directly involved the authority of the state versus the authority of the church itself, specifically clergymen of Presbyterian conviction, who believed they had a divine mandate to reform the church in conformity with Scripture (cf. Eph. 4:11). Furthermore, patterns of nonconformity and even separatism, inspired by especially

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158 White, \textit{The English Separatist Tradition}, 32.
159 Strype, \textit{Life and Acts of Matthew Parker}, 2:284. This particular phrase is however, absent in Burrage’s reproduction of the text, see Burrage, \textit{The Early English Dissenters}, 2:13-15.
161 Timothy George points to the significant absence of any evidence of criticism toward the national church or the episcopal hierarchy that characterized the later Separatist tradition, see John Robinson and the Separatist Tradition, 31.
\end{flushright}
Calvinist or Genevan ecclesiology, clearly existed prior to Browne’s enrollment in at Cambridge.  

### 2.3.4. Thomas Cartwright’s Dismissal

The new generation, now on the way of becoming the Presbyterian ‘Puritan’ movement, received their most significant spokesman in the person of Thomas Cartwright (1535-1603). It was Cartwright who, after his appointment as Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge in 1569, caused a tremendous turmoil with his opening lectures on the Acts of the Apostles. In this new position, Cartwright quickly brought the example of Genevan ecclesiology as a blueprint for a true reformed church to the forefront of the discussion. For although Calvin’s theology gained broad approval, his ecclesiology clearly did not. This was the time and the climate in which Robert Browne enrolled as a student at Cambridge University. Cartwright, in his these lectures on Acts, propagated a full-fledged presbyterian structure. It is generally assumed that he applied the earlier argument against the wearing of vestments—its lack of warranty in Scripture—to the sum of ecclesiology and especially ordained ministry. Cartwright, as it were, sieved the entire Church of England through the Apostolic example as pictured in Acts, and subsequently presented its purified remainders, not unlike Calvin’s example in Geneva.

Before he could finish his lectures—he presumably only came to chapter 6—he was deprived of his chair. In its aftermath, Cartwright himself grew out to be the leading polemicist of those Puritans advocating a Presbyterian policy. Though the literal text of Cartwright’s opening lectures is lost, this paragraph will consider a number of letters sent to Chancellor William Cecil, who was called upon to intervene and restore order in

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162 Cf. “That we have found signs of this attack already existing in 1566, is extremely significant, since some students of this period fail to look further back than the Admonition to Parliament of 1572 for the first ‘presbyterian’ attack. Indications of that movement, as well as of separatism, were present in the vestments literature of 1566.” Primus, The Vestments Controversy, 148.

163 See for the rise of the ‘Presbyterian movement’ Collinson, The Elizabethan Puritan Movement, 131-145; also Porter, Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge, 139-140; Trinterud, Elizabethan Puritans, 234-239; and Van ’t Spijker, Bisschop, Op ’t Hof, Het puritanisme, 41, 146.

164 See especially MacCulloch, The Later Reformation in England, 60-65. Areas of consensus were for example Calvin’s soteriology and his ideas on predestination.


These letters contain some main elements of the discussion and will help to reconstruct the core convictions that in its course won many young scholars for the Presbyterian agenda, among whom also Robert Browne. Moreover, the existence and contents of these letters show that—already from starters—Cartwright’s lectures did not fare well with some prominent Cambridge dons, particularly Cartwright’s predecessor William Chaderton, Edmund Grindal, and especially John Whitgift, then the Master of Trinity. What makes these letters even more interesting for our cause, is that Cartwright himself became aware of these protests and wrote some letters to his defense as well. William Cecil suddenly became mixed up in an academic warfare between ‘two sorts’ of Protestants.

The first known report came from William Chaderton, who is not to be confused with the Puritan divine Laurence Chaderton. William Chaderton later became bishop of Chester (1579-1595). Although he is then reported to have established a system of prophesyings in his diocese in the early 1580’s, he should be counted among those who held to a more moderate Protestant course. Chaderton alerted Cecil with a letter, dated 11 June 1570, in which he informed the latter about the events surrounding Cartwright’s lectures. Chaderton speaks of “such errors and schismes, openlie taughte and pre[a]ched, boldlie and without warrant,” which he thought were not only a threat to the peace of the university but also to the whole society. At this time Cartwright’s lectures still took place, and Chaderton offers Cecil a firsthand insight:

First one Mr. Cartwrighte latelie chosen Into my place, reader of the divinitie lector founded by ladie margaret, who hathe always stubburnelie refused the cappe, and suche like ornaments agre[e]able to gods law, and the que[e]nes majesties Injunctions, dothe now In his daylie lectors teache suche doctrine as Is pernitious, and not tollerable In a chri[st]ian comonwealthe:

That is that in the church of Englande there is no lawfull

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171 Cf. Knappen, Tudor Puritanism, 262-263, 276; and Collinson, The Elizabethan Puritan Movement, 170, 210-212, 460. In a passage reporting arguments made against the new Statutes of 1570 a reference is made to William Chaderton, who apparently disrupted a public disputation threatening one of the speakers, a certain Mr. Hanson of Trinity College, by shouting “Statim mittam te ad carceres, statim, jam, jam!”[I will send you to prison at once, immediately, now, now!]. James Heywood and Thomas Wright, Cambridge University Transactions (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854), 77.
and ordinarie callinge and chosinge or admittinge of ministers
neither anie ministerie: and that the election of ministers
and bishoppes at this daye is tyrannous: and Archiepiscopi,
decani, archidiaconi, etc. be officia et no[m]ina Impietatis. 173

Obviously Chaderton tried to link Cartwright’s views with the previous anti-vestment
camp of the 1560’s, discussed in § 2.3.3. Assuming that he only mentioned Cartwright’s
most controversial statements, it is significant that all items listed pertain to the state of
ordained ministry within the Church of England. It seems that Cartwright considered the
current episcopal ordination of parish ministry in conflict (‘unlawful’) with Scripture,
and the whole structure of ministerial titles illegitimate. Thus, where the vestments
controversy primarily concerned the outward appearance of the ministry, Cartwright’s
lectures more specifically challenged the structures of ministry. A second letter followed
on June 25th, written by Edmund Grindal. 174 While a former student of Bucer, and not
unsympathetic to the Protestant cause, Cartwright’s thoroughgoing Presbyterian claims
lead him to urge Cecil to take strong measures: “There is one Cartwright, B.D., and Reader
of my Lady Margaret’s Divinity Lecture, who, as I am very credibly informed, maketh in
his lectures daily invectives against the extern policy and distinction of states in the
ecclesiastical government of this realm.” 175 Grindal evidently considered Cartwright’s
lectures a threat to the public and ecclesial order. He therefore included a synopsis of
Cartwright’s thoughts, previously delivered to Vice-Chancellor John May by Cartwright
himself. It contains two major points: 176 first, that titles of archbishop and archdeacon

173 State Papers Dom. Eliz. 12/71. The Latin text says: ‘Archbishops, deacons, archdeacons and further,’ be
‘impious offices and names’. Besides Cartwright, Chaderton also warned Cecil for the activities and teachings of Edmund
Chapman and Robert Some, whose names would later appear under the petitions in favor of Cartwright. For Robert Some
and his turn to a more moderate course, see Hoyle, Reformation and Religious Identity in Cambridge, 41, 50-52.

174 Patrick Collinson missed the earlier letter of William Chaderton, when posing “It was Grindal who first
alerted Cecil, . . . to the danger posed by Cartwright”. Collinson, Archbishop Grindal, 182. Grindal, as mentioned above,
was a former student of Martin Bucer, and returned after Elizabeth’s ascension to England as bishop of London (1559-
1570), to eventually become Archbishop, first of York (1570-1575), and then of Canterbury (1576-1583). Later on, his
career took a dramatic turn when he was put under house arrest by Elizabeth in 1577, for his reluctance in enforcing
uniformity with regard of the Puritan prophesyings (see Collinson, Archbishop Grindal, esp. 49-56, 167-183, 233-253; and
The Elizabethan Puritan Movement, 159-167). In his last book, Collinson offers compelling evidence that Sir Christopher
Hatton, Queen Elizabeth’s favorite statesman, and possibly her lover too, was behind Grindal’s fall. See Richard Bancroft
and Elizabethan Anti-Puritanism, 51-53.

323.

176 The Latin/English text of this enclosure is as follows: “Archiepiscoporum et archidiaconorum nomina
suspecta sunt: 1. Archiepiscoporum, archidiaconorum, cancellariorum, commissariorum, etc. (ut hodie apud nos sunt)
munera apostolica institutione non nituntur, cui restituendae quisque pro vocatione sua studere debet; intelligo autem id
‘pro vocatione sua,’ ut magistrates auctoritate, ecclesiae ministri verbo, singuli eam promoveant. Ita tamen ut nihil
tumultaerit aut seditione fuit. 2. Ministeriorum electo quae apud nos est ab institutione apostolica deflexit: cui restituendae,
sicut praedictum est, singuli studere debeat. Nolim autem me putet quispiam omnes damnare, tanguam a ministerio alienos,
qui ad illum institutionem hactenus non fuerint cooptati. Other assertions uttered at other times by the said Cartwright: 1.
That he himself, being a reader of divinity, is a Doctor exercising the office named, Ephes iv., and therefore must only read,
are not based on the apostolic foundation and that everyone, both civil authorities as ministers of the word, should strive for their restoration; and second, that the present election of ministers is deviated from the apostolic foundation. Grindal added a few other points, which includes a most interesting note recalling Cartwright’s own defense: “That he himself, being a reader of divinity, is a Doctor exercising the office named, Ephes iv., and therefore must only read, and may not preach.” Ephesians 4:11 again emerges as a key-text to designate the particular role and responsibility of the ministry, in this particular instance Cartwright’s own role as ‘doctor’. He clearly followed Calvin’s interpretation, recognizing the dual ministry of pastor and teacher. Additionally, Grindal mentions Cartwright’s advocacy of the necessity of congregational consent for the appointment of ministers and his rejection of parish pluralism. The content of these lectures was apparently not lost on the young audience, which is evident from Grindal’s firm warning with regard to the attraction among the younger scholars: “The youth of the University, which is at this time very toward in learning, doth frequent his lectures in great numbers; and therefore in danger to be poisened by him.” The tone of Grindal’s letter betrays a self-confidence which might have to do with his recent elevation to the Archbishopric of York on 1 May 1570—seeing his rather straightforward requests to Cecil. Cecil is asked to command Vice-Chancellor May to call Cartwright and his followers “to silence” and “to reduce the offenders to conformity,” and if unwilling “to proceed to their punishment, by expulsion out of their colleges, or out of the university.” With his last sentences, Grindal admonishes Cecil to withhold Cartwright his Doctor of Divinity (D.D.) degree, since his lectures reveal a “singularity” and “the said Cartwright is not conformable in his apparel; ‘contemning’ also many other laudable orders of the university.” Grindal’s hostility toward Cartwright raises some questions, considering his earlier affections toward Bucer’s idea of a reformed church. Patrick Collinson, in his book on Grindal, makes a helpful distinction between Grindal’s theological anliegen, that may be considered ‘Puritan’, and his loyalty toward the English church, which did not allow for the “extreme scrupulosity” with which Cartwright rejected the wearing of vestments and the inherited structures of ecclesiastical government. These issues belonged to the ‘indifferent matters’, important yet not

indispensable. Another possibility is that Cartwright reminded him of the semi-Separatists of Plumbers’ Hall, whose leaders Grindal had helped to be imprisoned.\textsuperscript{183} In any case, Grindal’s complaints correspond with Collinson’s image of a theologian of reformed conviction, but with a “deep abhorrence of . . . schism” and “a relentless opponent of separatist puritanism”.\textsuperscript{184}

Seemingly, Cartwright heard of the previous correspondence and sends his apology to William Cecil, dated on 9 July 1570. Not hesitant to show his abilities, Cartwright wrote his carefully drafted and respectful letter in Latin. It is primarily written in defense of his own position, which he clearly feels threatened by a ‘conspiracy’ of his colleagues, who aspire a premature ending of his academic career. Well aware of the fear of a resurgence of the vestment controversy, he explicitly denies such accusations, though he admits that the limitations of a letter cannot include all the particulars of his lecture to prove his point.\textsuperscript{185} There is one explicit reference to his lectures that stands out. He writes: “I do not deny that I have taught that our ministry has deviated from the ministry of the patristic and apostolic church; I longed to see our purity measured and formed accordingly.”\textsuperscript{186} Cartwright’s rendering is fairly consistent with the tenure of the previous letters. Cartwright denies, however, that his lectures are motivated by mere criticism or malicious intent. To confirm his sincerity he simply points to the enclosed testimony “of many and uncorrupted men, who took part” in the lectures.\textsuperscript{187} A testimony which is, together with fourteen others, subscribed by the newly installed Master of Corpus Christi, Thomas Aldrich. It roughly serves to plead Cartwright free from sedition and to pronounce the caution and moderation with which Cartwright explained his position concerning church ministry.\textsuperscript{188} Nonetheless, it further evidences that that Cartwright turned “Puritanism into a new channel, the question of ministry and of ecclesiastical government.”\textsuperscript{189}

Cecil responded with a letter of his own on the 3rd of August that is addressed to the college heads, in which he passes a strikingly mild verdict on the whole event. Cartwright’s lectures contained, in his view, only “some new observations of the errors in the ministry of the church.”\textsuperscript{190} Being on a distance, and receiving letters from both

\textsuperscript{183} Collinson, \textit{Archbishop Grindal}, 179-180; and \textit{The Elizabethan Puritan Movement}, 88-89.

\textsuperscript{184} Collinson, \textit{Archbishop Grindal}, 179.

\textsuperscript{185} “Non possum omnia quae ea ipsa lectione, quae istum rumorem pepererit, continebantur, κατὰ λεπτὸν epistola includere”. Appendix IV, Pearson, \textit{Thomas Cartwright and Elizabethan Puritanism}, 424.


\textsuperscript{187} “En fero tibi (honoratiss. vir) plurimorum et incorruptissimorum hominem, qui interfuereunt, testimonium.” Appendix IV, Pearson, \textit{Thomas Cartwright and Elizabethan Puritanism}, 424.

\textsuperscript{188} “de ministerio proposuisse quaedam quorum ad amussim nostrum hoc formari cupiebat”. Appendix V, Pearson, \textit{Thomas Cartwright and Elizabethan Puritanism}, 425.

\textsuperscript{189} Pearson, \textit{Thomas Cartwright and Elizabethan Puritanism}, 33.

\textsuperscript{190} Strype, \textit{Annals of Reformation}, vol. 1/2:377.
parties, Cecil admits his difficulty in determining Cartwright’s intentions, “being, as it seemeth, not of arrogancy, or intention to move troubles; but, as a reader of the scripture, to give notes, by way of comparison between the order of the ministry in the times of the apostles, and the present times not in this church of England.”

Having diagnosed the situation as an internal academic dispute, Cecil hoped to restore peace by prohibiting both parties from discussing these questions in lectures and sermons, and hence by period of pause, prevent further provocation. Ostensibly a small victory for Cartwright, Cecil also delegated further action to the wisdom of the heads. This decision unquestionably determined Cartwright’s fate to his disadvantage. The college heads took the opportunity with both hands, and quickly agreed to suspend Cartwright from further teaching.

Only a week later, on 11 August, twenty-two Cambridge scholars petitioned Cecil to reinstall Cartwright to his position for the benefit of the university, among whom notably Thomas Aldrich and Richard Greenham. This petition brings the total number of declared ‘Cartwright supporters’ to thirty-three different men, which illustrates the impact these lectures had on Cambridge scholars. Cartwright clearly was not assured that his friends’ letter would settle the matter, and he too sends a second letter to Cecil, dated on 18 August 1570. After again many words of courtesy, he firmly rejected the suspicion of being a ‘revolutionary’, here designated a νεωτεροποιός: someone bringing new, disruptive and unprecedented ideas.

For, writes Cartwright, “its cause is most ancient, born with the church of Christ and the apostles.” Though he neglects to mention the precise content of his lectures, his words do confirm that the controversy arose over his critical use of Scripture over against the ministerial practices of the church of England. The persistence of Cartwright, and Cecil’s mild judgement earlier, moved another Cambridge head, John Whitgift, to write another letter, dated 19 August 1570. It is essentially a new attempt to show the severity of the situation at Cambridge, for Cecil “doth not fully understand Mr Cartwright’s opinions.”

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193 Cf. “Cecil leaves the decision to the Vice-Chancellor and the college heads, and thus in effect leaves Cartwright at the mercy of his opponents.” Pearson, *Thomas Cartwright and Elizabethan Puritanism*, 35.
brief overview of Cartwright’s opinions, based on what he heard “in private conference”
and “openly taught” by Cartwright himself:197

The first is, That there ought not in the church of Christ be either archbishop,
archdeacon, dean, chancellor, or any other whereof mention is not expressly
made in the scripture.
2. That the office of the bishop and deacon, as they be now in this church of
England, is not allowable.
3. That there ought to be an equality of ministers, and every one to be chief in
his own cure.198
4. That ministers ought to be chosen by the people, as they were in the apostles’
time.
5. That none ought to be minister unless he have a cure.
6. That a man should not preach out of his own cure.
7. That the order of calling and making ministers, now used in this church of
England, is extraordinary, and to be altered.199

With this list Whitgift obviously intends to convince Cecil that Cartwright’s lectures did
not merely consist of academic reflection, but were inherently subversive toward the
English church. For Cartwright’s criticism did not only concern church hierarchy, but
also aimed at the whole diocesan system and the episcopal ordination of ministers.
Significant, according to Whitgift’s complaint, is Cartwright’s use of Scripture as the
ultimate standard for ecclesiology instead of Canon Law. To counter the tides, Whitgift
mentions additionally his plan of renewing the Statutes of the University. It was designed
to distribute more power into the hands of the Vice-Chancellor, at the expense of the
college heads, thereby downplaying the role of these young and hasty Puritans.200 Only a
few weeks later, under the new regulations, Whitgift was elected as Vice-Chancellor, and
a month later, in December, Cartwright was removed from his chair, at the instigation of
Whitgift who decided that his opinions were contrary to state religion.201 It did not,
however, lead to the much wished quietness, but rather gave a new impetus to opposition,
especially to the younger Fellows. In the process of his removal, the nine heads gave
Cartwright a last chance to renounce his opinions. John Strype, in his account of the

197 The Works of John Whitgift, 1: 599.
199 The Works of John Whitgift, 1:599.
200 See Porter, Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge, 163-165, 176; Thompson, Universities in Tudor England, 7; Hoyle, Reformation and Religious Identity in Cambridge, 18-19; and Collinson, Richard Bancroft and Elizabethan Anti-Puritanism, 17-18. For the actual text of the 1570 Statutes, see Heywood and Wright, Cambridge University Transactions, 1-45.
matter, clearly sides with Whitgift and the heads, writing that “Cartwright was after this earnestly dealt withal by the heads,” but still chose to “stiffly” defend his lectures.\textsuperscript{202} It should again be noted that between his previous letter and this final proposition, Whitgift was elected Vice-Chancellor. Under his newly acquired authority, he asked Cartwright to present his views one last time. Cartwright’s ‘confession’, provided with Cartwright’s own signature, were subsequently sent to Cecil for examination. The Latin text is included both in John Strype’s \textit{Annals of the Reformation} (1824), as well as Thomas Fuller’s \textit{History of the University of Cambridge} (1840):

I. The names archbishops and archdeacons, together with their functions and duties, are to be abolished.
II. The names of legitimate ministries in the church, such as bishops and deacons, functions which are separately described in God’s Word, in like manner are to be disapproved and returned to its apostolic institution. As a bishop [is] of Word and prayer, a deacon is directed to caring for the poor.
III. The governance of the church should not be entrusted to episcopal chancellors, or archdeacons’ officials; but should be conferred to the competent minister and presbytery of that church.
IV. An undefined and independent ministry is not right; but everyone should definitely be trained and [bound] to a certain flock.
V. No one should demand the ministry when a candidate.
VI. Bishops should not be made ‘ministers’ only through [secular] authority and power; much less in a backroom\textsuperscript{203} or a secret place, but the election ought to be made by the church.\textsuperscript{204}

The contents of Cartwright’s ‘own’ summary of convictions does not diverge much from all the rest. He roughly follows the ‘model’ of Acts (6:3-4; 20:28; cf. Phil. 1:1). The main points are the abolition of episcopal hierarchy, the absolute normativity of Scripture for ecclesiology, the importance of a competent ministry, and the congregational authority to appoint its ministry. Significant in this list is, however, the specific critique toward the

\textsuperscript{202} Strype, \textit{Annals of Reformation}, vol. 1/2:379.
\textsuperscript{203} ‘\textit{in museo}’ here is likely to refer to a place of study (see Glare, ed. \textit{Oxford Latin Dictionary}, 1148), representing the place where bishops signed the preaching licenses or appointed parish ministers.
\textsuperscript{204} “I. Archiepiscoporum et archidiaconorum nomina simul cum muneribus et officiis suis, sunt abolenda. II. Legitimorum in ecclesia ministrorum nomina, qualia sunt episcoporum et diaconorum, separate a suis muneribus in verbo Dei descriptis, similiter sunt improbanda, et ad institutionem apostolicam revocanda. Ut episcopus in verbo et precibus: diaconus in pauperibus carandis versetur. III. Episcoporum cancellariis, aut archidiaconorum officialibus regimen ecclesiae non est committum; sed ad idoneum ministrum et presbyterium ejusdem ecclesiae deferendum. IV. Non oportet ministerium esse vagum et liberum: sed quisque debet certo cuidam gregi addici. V. Nemo debet ministerium tanquam candidatus petere. VI. Episcopi tantum authoritate et potestate ministri non sunt creadi; multo minus in museo, aut loco quopiam clanculario: sed ab ecclesia electione fieri debet.” Strype, \textit{Annals of Reformation}, vol. 1/2: 380; also Thomas Fuller, \textit{The History of the University of Cambridge and of Waltham Abbey} (London: Thomas Tegg, 1840), 199.
queens’s autonomous appointment of bishops independent from the church’s consent. It shows the influence of Calvin who, as noted, stressed a stricter separation of church and state. In the end, it expressively posits the argument for the absolute normativity of Scripture that brought the Presbyterians in conflict with the established church. It took them, according to Paul Avis, even further than Calvin himself, who did not maintain this conviction. In the letter which accompanied Cartwright’s views, the heads urged Cecil to agree upon depriving Cartwright from his chair and thereby preventing possible schism as well as further contempt of authority. On 11 December 1570, Cartwright was finally removed from his position primarily based upon the above theses, which were considered to be against established religion. However, though the new Statutes might have served to deprive the younger generation of scholars from their voice in university affairs, they also strengthened the Protestant course of education in an attempt to counter lingering Roman-Catholicism.

This reconstruction of the events surrounding Cartwright’s lectures upon Acts and its contents has shown how much the concept of ordained ministry stood at the center of his argument. Not only did Cartwright question the ordaining authority of the bishops, he also advocated the sole authority of the local congregation to elect and ordain its ministers and the basic equality of all ministers. Given the fact that Cartwright’s lectures were on Acts, it is remarkable that Grindal includes Cartwright’s reference to Ephesians 4:11 to justify his own authority to introduce Geneva’s presbyterian ecclesiology, being a ‘doctor of the church’. It should moreover be noted that all three appellants were firm Protestants, and Whitgift could even be considered a Calvinist.

The conflict that occupied Cambridge University during Browne’s studentship was therefore not between ‘Catholics’ and ‘Protestants’, but between Protestants themselves, who disputed the authority of individual ministers to interpret Scripture over against ecclesiological structures of the Church of England. The significance of Thomas


\[207\] See Pearson, Thomas Cartwright and Elizabethan Puritanism, 42-43.

\[208\] See Porter, Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge, 109; Thompson, Universities in Tudor England, 7; and Collinson, Richard Bancroft and Elizabethan Anti-Puritanism, 19-20. Surprisingly, back then, Richard Bancroft was one of the protesters against these new statutes.

\[209\] See Thompson, Universities in Tudor England, 9, 19-20; and Porter, Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge, 50-51. Lecturers in theology were now obligated to base their theological lectures solely upon Scripture. Every day was to consist of prayer, a one hour lecture upon Aristotle’s natural philosophy, around noon two lectures upon Greek construction and grammar (Homer, Demosthenes, etc.), and at three in the afternoon a lecture on rhetoric, based on Cicero. On Wednesday and Friday students were also required to attend public disputations where one of the Fellows would make a dogmatic argument from a Biblical passage, aided by the Church Fathers.

\[210\] For Whitgift’s Calvinist convictions, see Lake, “Calvinism and the English Church 1570-1635,” 32-48; and Collinson, Richard Bancroft and Elizabethan Anti-Puritanism, 6-7, 221.
Cartwright for Cambridge nonconformity cannot easily be overstated. We can conclude, therefore, that Cartwright’s lectures further amplified nonconformity at Cambridge in the 1570’s, creating an intellectual atmosphere in which particularly young men, among whom Robert Browne, became familiar with a Presbyterian mode of Biblical interpretation.

2.3.5. The Admonition Controversy

After Thomas Cartwright was silenced, others followed in his footsteps. Among the fiercest followers were two Oxford dons, John Field and Thomas Wilcox. Although this chapter is especially concerned with Cambridge, Field and Wilcox were responsible for the loudest cry for presbyterian government echoing Cartwright’s lectures to a wider audience: the famous pamphlet *An Admonition to Parliament* (1572). According to Patrick Collinson, “a milestone in the developing history of the use of the printing press for radical political ends.” The Admonition moved the fight for the church from the academia to the parliament and the street. Already in 1566 a series of ecclesiastical bills were put forward in the House of Commons, but they were blocked by Queen Elizabeth and shortly afterwards the parliament was dissolved. New attempts were made to get permission for the Puritan way of worship during the next meetings of parliament in 1571 and 1572. Although slight changes were allowed to grant the local preacher some liberty, this small victory was quickly overshadowed by the queen’s announcement that future bills concerning matters of the church were not to be brought before the House, unless they were “considered and liked by the clergy.” With this statement she meant the consent of the bishops and herself! It is within this climate that we find the *Admonition*: a new attempt to bring reformation, no longer conforming to prescribed protocol. As C.S. Lewis accurately remarks, “[t]hey do not petition but admonish.” The first *Admonition* launched a polemic, known as the Admonition Controversy, which would last until 1577 and “marked the first systematic attack against the government of

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211 Cf. Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church*, 6-7, 11, 77-92. Albert Peel and Leland Carlson therefore dedicated the first volume in their series *Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts* (ENCT) to the legacy of Cartwright, as the seminal basis for further nonconformist publications.


the established church in Protestant England.”218 For soon after its appearance Matthew Parker asked John Whitgift to write a response, entitled Answere to a certen Libell intitled, an admonition to the Parliament (1572/1573), including only briefly a refutation of another pamphlet that only just appeared, the Second Admonition, whose author remains unknown. Though not directly involved thus far, it is significant that Thomas Cartwright stepped in to defend the Presbyterian position against Whitgift and wrote his Replye to an answere made of M. Doctor Whitegifte againste the Admonition to the Parliament (1573). A reaction from Whitgift seemed inevitable once Cartwright interfered, and in 1574 Whitgift wrote a Defense of the Answer to the Admonition against the Replie of T.C. In 1575 and 1577 Cartwright responded again with a two-part treatise, known as Second Replie, that remained unanswered, and therefore ended the religious debate.219 Part of the discussion was the legacy of both Martin Bucer and John Calvin.220 For Cartwright however, this debate would receive an unpleasant continuation in the 1590’s, when his convictions were submitted to formal examinations, finding in Richard Bancroft his prosecutor, and again ‘Archbishop’ Whitgift as his chief antagonist.221 In any case, the Admonition itself brought the call for a reformation according to the Book of Acts, following Cartwright’s academic lectures, to a wider audience. Its authors, Field and Wilcox, thereby succeeded Cartwright in his Presbyterian leadership and picked up his ecclesiological ideas. Although addressed to the parliament, it was less an appeal to the government than to the people.222 Its publication was a deliberate act of disobedience to

218 Eppley, "Defender of the Peace," 314.
219 The arguments of this literal debate have been studied at lengths by Donald McGinn in The Admonition Controversy; also Frere and Douglas, Puritan Manifestoes, vii-xxxi; Eppley, "Defender of the Peace," 312-335; and recently Andrew V. Cinnamond, “Diversity in the Reformed English Tradition: An Introduction to the Admonition Controversy (1572-1577),” (Phd dissertation, London School of Theology, 2011). For the circumstances in which the pamphlet was written, see Marcy L. North, The Anonymous Renaissance: Cultures of Discretion in Tudor-Stuart England (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), esp. 134-137.
220 See Nicholas Thompson, “Martin Bucer and Early Seventeenth-Century Scottish Irenicism,” in The Reception of the Continental Reformation in Britain, 171.
221 See Pearson, Thomas Cartwright and Elizabethan Puritanism, 330-358; and Collinson, Richard Bancroft and Elizabethan Anti-Puritanism, 83, 103-128. Under Elizabeth the Privy Council developed (in the form of the Court of Star Chamber) towards a politically powerful institution particularly occupied with opposing the advancement of non-conformity, taking over the most weighty cases from the High Commission (see Christopher Haigh, “The Continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation,” in The English Reformation Revised, ed. Christopher Haigh [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (1987), 1990], 189-191). John Whitgift was the first Archbishop that rose to join the Privy Council—the last one being Cardinal Poole during Mary’s reign. He reintroduced a most powerful weapon, the oath ex officio mero, used earlier during the Marian ecclesial commissioners (cf. Porter, Reformation and Reaction, 158-159; and Collinson, Richard Bancroft and Elizabethan Anti-Puritanism, 44-48, 54). It obligated an defendant to make an oath to answer truthfully all questions, and thus deliver evidence against their own case, or face the charge of perjury. The oath therefore functioned as a kind of self-incriminating tool. It was Thomas Cartwright who refused to take the oath in his interrogation by Whitgift. Cartwright wrote an entire tract in dismissal of this practice, see his "Treatise on the Oath Ex Officio," in Cartwrightiana, 31-46.
222 McGinn, The Admonition, 25-26. Patrick Collinson mentions a later statement in which a witness in Star Chamber reported Field as having said: "Seeing we cannot compass these things by suit or dispute, it is the multitude and people that must bring the discipline to pass which we desire". See Patrick Collinson, “An Admonition to the Parliament (June 1571),” in Puritans and Puritanism in Europe and America, 295.
the queen’s demand, hoping to find the willing ear of the people.\textsuperscript{223} Field and Wilcox took a great risk with their tract, facing the dangers of imprisonment and possible death. To evade the censorship of the press, they had it secretly printed in Hampstead and circulated before the end of parliament on June 30\textsuperscript{th}. It immediately gained attention. So much so, that already on 7 July both writers were being charged and sent to prison for a year.\textsuperscript{224} Yet their voices were not to be quieted and the first \textit{Admonition} was reprinted three times in two months.\textsuperscript{225} Like Cartwright’s lectures earlier, it was received with applause particularly among young Cambridge theologians.\textsuperscript{226}

The first \textit{Admonition} discussed the three issues which appeared earlier in Richard Fitz’ \textit{The trewe markes of Christes church, &c.} (1569): the truthful preaching of the Word, the right administration of the sacraments, and the application of discipline. Its main focus, however, was upon the abolition of the episcopal hierarchy and magistracy that displaced the rule of Christ, not by chance the principal argument of Cartwright’s lectures. The church, in the view of Field and Wilcox, was no longer a true church and thus it must be reformed. First, ministers should be called and ordained by local churches, not by bishops. Second, ministers were to be “equal preachers”, instead of “hierarchical priests”. And third, ecclesiastical discipline should be restored and placed in the hands of the local ministry. Only then could the church be truly Christian, Christ’s rule restored, and the influence of Antichrist erased. Originally, the publication of the \textit{Admonition} consisted of two treatises framed by a preface (“To the godly readers”) and an epilogue (“To the Christian reader”). In strong language it argued for the rejection of the power of the episcopal hierarchy and the magistracy in church affairs, which is perceived as substituting for the reign of Christ.\textsuperscript{227} Both bishops and magistrates were designated a “proude generation,” whose “tyrannous Lordshippe can not stande with Christes kingdome.”\textsuperscript{228} This diagnosis, so it would seem, did not leave any room for

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{FrereDouglas17} Frere and Douglas, \textit{Puritan Manifestoes}, vii.
\bibitem{FrereDouglas18} Frere and Douglas, \textit{Puritan Manifestoes}, xiii.
\bibitem{FrereDouglas20} Frere and Douglas, \textit{Puritan Manifestoes}, xvii-xviii; and White, \textit{The English Separatist Tradition}, 34.
\bibitem{Whitgift1} Apparently, Field said in an interview with Archbishop Matthew Parker’s chaplain: “We have used gentle words too long, and we perceive they have done no good. The wound growth desperate…It is no time to brench, not to sew cushions under men’s elbows or to flatter them in their sins.” Collinson, “An Admonition to the Parliament (June 1571),” 296; John Whitgift also refers to harsh language used in the Admonition: “Verily you might have answered as well as you have done, and had better regard both to your oath and to your brethren. But to let that pass, I doubt whether you mean good faith or no, when you would make us believe that you take us for brethren; for surely that doth not appear either by the first or second Admonition.” See John Whitgift, “The defence of the answer to the Admonition against the reply of T.C,” in \textit{The Works of John Whitgift}, vol. 1 (ed. John Ayre: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1861), 15. There is some evidence that the emphasis on the church discipline, is to be associated with influence of the reformer Martin Bucer. Steven Paas says: “The strong emphasis on the Lordship ("koningschap") of Christ and the importance of the discipline in the church point to the influence of Bucer.” See Paas, \textit{De Gemeenschap der heiligen}, 139. According to Diarmaid MacCulloch, Bucer introduced “a voluntary core-church movement . . . to steal Anabaptist thunder by lending fervor and tight discipline to the official church.” MacCulloch, \textit{The Boy King}, 144.
\bibitem{FieldWilcox1} John Field and Thomas Wilcox, “An admonition to the parliament,” in \textit{Puritan Manifestoes}, 5.
\end{thebibliography}
nuance. The Church of England may have broken with the pope of Rome, but the problem of a church in which “Popelike” power, now attributed to other men, continued. The choice was simple, according to the pamphleteers, “Either must we have right ministry of God, & a right government of his church, according to the scriptures sette up (both whiche we lacke) or else there can be no right religion”. The reference ‘right ministry’ is, though without further explication, accompanied by a reference to Ephesians 4:11. They enhanced their statement by an implicit threat: “Only the authors of these, thoughte it their partes to admonishe you at this time, of those inconveniences which men seme not to thincke upon, and which without reformation, can not but increase further dissention.” Without reformation, separation could not be avoided. A reformation not only required the abolishment of “popish remnants,” but also “bringing in and placing in Gods church those things only, which the Lord himself in his word commandeth.” Hence the call for reformation takes specific shape as a call for “restitution”: the restitution of ministry, sacraments, and church discipline along the lines of the “Old church” as presented in Scripture, and especially in the Book of Acts. Nothing was to be done without “the expresse warrant of Gods worde.” First, true ministry depended on the right election of ministers, being “accordyng to Gods worde proved, elected, called, or ordained.” This is placed over the present practice where “godly character and teaching ability” are exchanged for the possession of a preaching license. Licenses were given by bishops to unlearned and the “basest sorte of people.” In its place, the right of election was to be put with the local congregation, so that ministers could be elected by common consent:

Then the congregation had authoritie to cal ministers: in stead thereof now, they runne, they ryde, and by unlawful sute & buying, prevent other suters also. Then no minister placed in any congregation, but by the consent of the people, now, that authoritie is given into the hands of the byshop alone, who by his sole authoritie thrusteth upon them such, as they many times aswel for unhonest life, as also for lacke of learning, may, & doe justly dislike.

The emphasis on the authority of the local church (cf. Acts 6:2-3) is put in sharp contrast to the practice of bishops appointing officers to local churches. Ordination had become a

ceremony marked by that "blasphemous saying, receave the holy gost." Instead, the Admonition asked for the restoration of the practice “of laying on of the hands” after “just tryal and vocation” by the local Elders. Meanwhile, “ignorant and unable ministers” should be displaced. This return to the local church, as seen in the Admonition, is founded upon the understanding that “true ministry” only exists in relation to a calling by a local congregation, as pictured notably in Ephesians 4:11: “Then every pastor had his flocke, and every flocke his shepheard, or els shepheards.” The reference to Ephesians 4:11, on this point in the Admonition, is used as an argument against the disentanglement of ordained ministry and local congregations, an argument which appeared previously in Cartwright’s statements. ‘Right ministry’ is a locally embedded preaching ministry. Turning ecclesiology upside down, the office of bishops was disputed: first by disputing their many vocations—most bishops had so many “flocks”, that they could not possibly be “feeding” them properly. And secondly, on a deeper level, by disputing the inequality between offices; titles and positions—such as archbishop, lord bishop, archdean—are regarded unbiblical and to be devised by an Antichrist. True ministry exists of three equal offices: “And to three jointly, that is, the Ministers, Seniors, and Deacons, is the whole regiment of the church to be committed.” Additionally, the Admonition sought a reformation of the content of ministry as well. Priests had to become “preachers” and deacons should be restored in their caring role. Ministers were not to be priests, primarily occupied with the administration of sacraments, but first and foremost ‘preachers’ who functioned as God’s living voice: “Then, as God gave utterance they preached the worde onely: now they read homilies, articles, injunctions, etc.” The reading of homilies, as was widely practiced in Elizabethan times, was a thorn in the side of Puritans, who considered such ‘sermonizing’ not real preaching at all, and proof of the insufficiency of English clergy. As Arnold Hunt writes in The Art of Hearing (2010), Puritans thought that the mere reading of homilies “could not save souls, because it lacked the converting power of the spoken

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239 Though primarily the responsibility for right ministry is attributed to the local church, the Admonition also recognizes the responsibility of Parliament to “appoint to every congregation a learned & diligent preacher”. See Field, Wilcox, “An admonition to the parliament,” 12.
voice.” The first responsibility of every minister, therefore, was the education of the people by explaining God’s Word, and thus, the sacraments were subordinated to the sermon. First the Word had to be preached and only then the sacraments could be properly administered.

The second major point of the *Admonition* is the restoration of discipline. Ecclesiastical discipline was deemed God’s gift to live according to his will, “by instructing and admonishing one another.” Discipline is explained as the most important means for the reformation of the church: “The final end of this discipline, is the reforming of the disordered, and to bring them to repentance, and to bridle such as wold offend. The chieffest parte and last punishment of this discipline is excommunication, by the consent of the church determined.” First, it criticized the corrupt exercise of discipline by bishops, reversing excommunication for the right amount of money. Secondly, it denied bishops and magistrates having authority at all, “who hath by Gods worde no authoritie to cal” and unjustly hand it over to civil courts. So that public penance is substituted for a fine. Instead, the exercise of discipline should be attributed to local officers, in close cooperation with the whole membership (cf. 1 Cor. 5:4, “gathered church”). Discipline was not to be placed in the hands of “one alone” but belongs “in many mennes hands.”

By directing so much attention to the importance of local church discipline, the *Admonition* directly problematized the existence of a state governed church. First, by stipulating that church membership not only depended on right confession but also on right conduct. Members were themselves responsible for the truthfulness of church by watching their own lives and those of their fellow brothers and sisters. Church membership was not based merely on baptism, but also required visible altered lives. The then current neglect of discipline failed to keep the Church of England “true”. Secondly, it questioned the authority of the magistracy in matters of the church. The *Admonition* carefully discerned two powers (cf. spiritual and civil) and urged that their authority be “kept within the limmits of his vocation” (cf. 1 Cor. 7:20): “Not that we meane to take away the authoretie of the civill Magistrate and chief governour, to whome we wish all blessednes, and for the encreace of whose godliness we dayly pray: but that Christ being restored into his kyngdome, to rule in the same by the scepter of his worde, and severe discipline.” This differentiation between civil and ecclesial authority was made to

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249 “the regiment lefte of Christe to his church, is committed into one mannnes hands”. See Field, Wilcox, “An admonition to the parliament,” 17-18.
highlight the differences in the character: ministers were not to bear rule, as the English bishops did, but to follow Christ’s example of service. In view of this obvious limitation of the crown’s power to the civil duties, it can hardly come as a surprise that it met such a resistance from Elizabeth’s government. By addressing the above reformations, the Admonition rendered itself a “platform” of a true reformed church, calling for “speedy reformation.” As shown, this vision is presented in sharp contrast with the contemporary status of the church, being not “rightly reformed, according to the prescript of God’s word.” A true church had to conform outwardly, meaning visibly, to the Biblical pattern. This is most intensely uttered in the Admonition’s ending plea: “But altogether remove whole Antichrist, both head and body and branch, and perfectly plant that purity of the word, that simplicitie of the sacraments, and severitie of discipline, which Christ hath commanded, and commended to his church.”

The Admonition repeats and elaborates on the same principles as found in Cartwright’s lectures. The authors make the ecclesial conformity to Scripture a matter of the greatest urgency (“or else there can be no right religion”). Concerning ordained ministry, the Admonition not only argues for the equality of ministry, but also for the local appointment by congregational consent. Right ministry is local ministry. Substantial for the course of this study is also the reference to Ephesians 4:11 as an explicit argument against the non-local authority of bishops: Christ “ordains” his minister to a local congregation. True ministry exists where a local congregation chooses its own preaching ministry and through local ministry God provides his people with a preaching ministry. Stronger than Cartwright however, is the call for church discipline which is also directly connected to a more independent position in relation to the state. Eamon Duffy, in an article about the pastoral developments within Puritanism, points out that the “reformed concern for discipline as one of the principal symptoms of this new understanding of Christianity” was not directed at ecclesial unity, but on separation of “the sheep from the goats.” Crucial in this division of the godly from the wicked was the preaching ministry. Meaning: a lively and practical form of preaching in which the words of Scripture were applied to the situation of the local parish. The result, in Duffy’s analysis, is “the formation of inner circles of the devout in many parishes, and smuggling

252 See extensively Polly Ha, English Presbyterianism, 1590-1640 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 22-27. Ha notes that the episcopal office was sometimes depicted as ‘hermaphrodite’ for its transgression of the civil and ecclesial roles.
253 Cf. “It should perhaps be of no surprise that in the controversy over the publication of the Puritan manifesto, An Admonition to Parliament, the Puritans had gained a reputation as seditious.” Chavura, Tudor Protestant Political Thought, 33.
what were in practice gathered churches in the parochial system.” It is clear that with this pamphlet the nonconformist camp increasingly developed a critical attitude toward the English church, and did not eschew to threaten with separatism, as indeed occurred earlier during the vestments controversy.

2.3.6. Richard Greenham’s Household

Next to Cartwright, the other Cambridge scholar who crossed Browne’s path is Richard Greenham (c. 1540-1594). He mentored Robert Browne for a period of time in the years prior to his separation. We also encountered Greenham’s name below the petition of 11 August 1570 for the reinstatement of Thomas Cartwright (see § 2.3.4.). That Greenham’s name appears under this petition suggests at least that he at that moment did not avoid association with Cartwright’s ideas. Greenham’s Presbyterian leanings also correspond with the ‘forward’ reputation, we found in Browne’s autobiography (see § 2.2.). In the midst of the uproar over Cartwright’s lectures, Greenham was appointed rector of Dry Drayton, on 27 November 1570. Still, Cambridge was never far away, since Dry Drayton is only a few miles outside the university’s city. Besides, Greenham’s reputation as a good preacher, often brought him to preach in one of the many chapels Cambridge offered. Nevertheless, it seems that, while Greenham acquired a reputation as a eminent preacher, his involvement in the Presbyterian movement was only minor. He kept himself largely outside the Cambridge disputes, rendering him, according to John Primus, “a member, . . . not a ringleader” within Presbyterian circles. Greenham, however, had a profound influence upon the younger generation Puritans, of whom he mentored a considerable number in his household seminary. During the 1570’s it became more and more common for Puritan ministers to take care of the next generation, as a sort of postgraduate seminary experience, be it in a more domestic environment. Alongside Browne, his students included Joseph Hall, Richard Rogers, the famous

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259 Before taking up his ministry in the parish of Dry Drayton, Greenham himself studied at Pembroke Hall at Cambridge University, enrolling in 27 May 1559 and graduating M.A. in 1567 in the wake of the vestments controversy. See Primus, Richard Greenham, 12-23.
261 See Porter, Reformation and Reaction, 208; and Knappen, Tudor Puritanism, 382. For Greenham’s name signed under an appeal to William Cecil, see Pearson, Thomas Cartwright and Elizabethan Puritanism, 427.
262 See Primus, Richard Greenham, 24.
263 Primus, Richard Greenham, 67.
preacher Henry ‘Silvertongued’ Smith, Arthur Hildersham, George Gifford, and possibly even Puritan’s most elaborate theologian: William Perkins.  

In 1998, Kenneth Parker and Eric Carlson published an annotated edition of a collection of individual (diary) sayings by Greenham, recorded by one of his household students. It is worth to mention, in the context of this chapter, that his notebook was found together with works attributed to Arthur Hildersham and, remarkably, to Thomas Cartwright. It is dated from 28 July 1581 to 31 January 1584, and structured according to the typical Ramist method of commonplaces (exempla), consisting of carefully ordered pastoral advice in established categories in view of later redeployment in teaching or preaching. It is an incomparable source, as it is probably the only remaining notebook of the many students that passed through Greenham’s household seminary. Hence, it will not only give a direct insight in Greenham’s own ministry and his views on pastoral matters, it will also provide a valuable insights about the scenery in which Greenham mentored his pupils, among whom Robert Browne. Despite the fact that his biographer John Primus considers these notes non-relevant as a source for Presbyterian disputes over church government, it does contain quite a few entries regarding the concrete practice of ministry within a particular parish from someone with Presbyterian preferences.

Considering Greenham’s views on ordained ministry, some particular anecdotes stand out. In a conversation (dated 3 October 1581) with a minister who sought his

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265 Cf. Parker and Carlson, ‘Practical Divinity’, 31, 95; Primus, Richard Greenham, 42-43; Jenkins, Henry Smith, 11, 14-15; and Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, “Practical Divinity and Spirituality,” in The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism, 193-194. Most of Greenham’s students stayed, at least for appearances sake, between the set lines of the established church. A notable exception, though never a Separatist, was Arthur Hildersham, who according to Lesley Rowe, “showed some sympathy for the reasons behind the separatists’ stance,” particularly with regard to discipline (The Life and Times of Arthur Hildersham: Prince Among Puritans [Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2013], 66). A protagonist of Cartwright’s Presbyterian views, Hildersham had his finest hour during the Hampton Court Conference, being one of the driving forces behind the millenary petition. Like Browne, he too faced multiple suspensions, was once imprisoned and once heavily fined for nonconformity (see Porter, Reformation and Reaction, 228). In the aftermath of Hampton Court he was deprived for like reasons from his parish in Ashby de la Zouch on 14 April 1605. Cf. Collinson, Richard Bancroft and Elizabethan Anti-Puritanism, 215.

266 See Parker and Carlson, ‘Practical Divinity’, 134-259.

267 This document is part of the so-called Rylands English Manuscript 524 (REM 524), which was placed in 1930 in the John Rylands Library in Manchester, and brought to public attention by Patrick Collinson in 1954. It is unknown, however, who is responsible for its compilation. Primus, following Patrick Collinson’s original estimation, thinks it has been compiled by Hildersham himself (see Richard Greenham, 9-10). Parker and Carlson, however, suggest John Hopkins, as he also provided Holland with Greenham’s material (see ‘Practical Divinity’, 35, esp. 367-370).


269 Cf. “Second, starting in the 1570s and continuing through the 1580s, a succession of young university men spent time at Dry Drayton, observing his ministry and preparing to model his pastoral service. Third, these university men, and others who came for direction and counsel, recorded his words and acts in notebooks.” Parker, and Carlson, ‘Practical Divinity’, 42.

270 Cf. “an excellent resource for a deeper and more detailed understanding of his Dry Drayton ministry.” Primus, Richard Greenham, 34.

271 Cf. Primus, Richard Greenham, 35.
council regarding his doubts about his ministerial vocation for the lack of sufficient gifts, Greenham urges patience and faithfulness: “I advice you not to depart. For as it is in marriage that though the parties meet in the flesh without any sanctified manner to assure themselves to bee joyned of the lord yet they are not to bee separated when god afterward giveth them grace to live holily in ther meetings.” Greenham here, as did many Puritans, compares the faithful relationship between a minister and people with the bond that exists between husband and wife. The emphasis on the local rootedness of a preaching ministry, as found with Cartwright and the Admonitioners, is explained by Greenham in terms of marital faithfulness: a minister was entrusted to a particular congregation, and vice versa. Likewise, Arnold Hunt writes: “the indissoluble relationship between pastor and people helped to create the lofty idea on which most puritan clergy tried to model themselves.” Also standing out in this particular note is Greenham’s differentiation between vocation and ability. For he might still receive the proper gifting from God. This does not mean that Greenham restricted the notion of calling only to the ministry, for he uses it for any responsibility in life, like marriage and occupation. Hence, “God hath given many callings in his church,” besides the calling to ordained ministry. In another note (dated January 31, 1584), Greenham confesses his reluctance in letting young men into the ministry, for their “preposterous zeal and hasting running” betrays a lack of stability and moderation. Though there is no specific name mentioned, it is likely that he makes this argument on the basis of his experiences with the young men under his care. It shows, at least, how much Greenham saw the ministerial calling as a tremendous responsibility which should not be taken up lightly: but when accepted, could not be easily left. Therefore every experienced pastors should follow his example and take up these young scholars “to bee his assistant in the ministry . . . to bee framed in like manner fit for the work of the lord.” Greenham nowhere disapproves of academic learning, yet he did infer the lack of pastoral experience and formation of young scholars..

From the entire document it becomes clear that Greenham envisioned the particular character of the ministry in terms of the preaching of Scripture. Preaching is described as the premier means to “bring men to Christ,” and an ordained minister is henceforth called, “the messenger of salvation.” Eric Carlson comments: “Greenham

273 Cf. Hunt, The Art of Hearing, 14, 195-203. This is also the main argument against the practice of ‘sermon-gadding’ which appeared in Elizabethan times. As clergymen were regarded with a more critical attitude, many parishioners began to broaden their horizon and traveled to hear sermon by their more favored preachers.
274 Hunt, The Art of Hearing, 199.
275 “The sayings of Richard Greenham,” 207.
understood preaching to be part of a great cosmic drama.”279 For Scripture, in Greenham’s view, represents the center of God’s dealings with people. And thus, ministers of this Word embodied a crucial means in God’s distribution of salvation. In the last entry of 1581 he expresses his sorrow over the lack of respect people often show to “the preacher of god and of his word.”280 How much this was an issue for Greenham becomes especially manifest in his change of tone. Where most entries exhibit a mildness and pastoral love toward people with all kinds of anxieties, a sharp disapproval sounds when his preaching is scrutinized: “When hee was gainsaid in a general truth, because the caus was not his own, but the Lords, hee would more vehemently reprove such a contempt of ministry, and say, wel beecaus you bring such an open resistance to mee on whom the comfort of your salvation doth consist.”281 Contempt of preachers was an increasing phenomenon in Greenham’s day.282 Although opposition was generally expected, due to the confrontational style of preaching with which Puritans intended to ‘separate the godly from the ungodly,’ it was understood as rebellion to God himself.283 Yet ‘to stir up controversy’ was need to bring the much aspired reformation. On more than one instance, Greenham therefore pronounces his sorrow over the decay of preaching in his day.284 Though eloquence in preaching could be a helpful preaching tool, he does utter his caution to make the power of a sermon dependent “on carnal and mans wisdom,” instead of “the power of the word” itself.285 Greenham’s esteem for the preaching ministry should, however, not be explained as underwriting spiritual classes. In a rare description of his household seminary, the following comment is included:

At the table, as hee was rare, either in the beginning wholesome talke with modesty, or in continuing it with power and vehemency: so hee was woont to say that it was an unchristian courtesy, that men should always stay for the preacher, seing they were anointed with the same spirit, though not with the like measure of like graces, and as though the minister alone was taught; therefore hee would wish others by praier to offer the speeches to god,286

It seems that students expected Greenham to lead people into prayers, as if this was something exclusively for ministers since they had a special spiritual endowment. Yet Greenham clearly opposed such reasoning. In many other notes relating to private

280 “The sayings of Richard Greenham,” 140.
282 Cf. Hunt, The Art of Hearing, 6, 242, 274-277, esp. 286-288. Hunt mentions several reasons for lay resistance toward preachers, such as the demand for ‘learned’ sermons interspersed with Latin phrases, a dislike of sermons on the Old Testament, and ‘Puritan’ legalism which was considered un-neighbourly.
286 “The sayings of Richard Greenham,” 144.
conversations a similar picture of informality and equal participation emerges. While Greenham clearly considered the preaching ministry essential to the church, he on the other hand did not reject a baptism performed by a non-preaching minister, for the blessing of baptism “doth not depend ex dignitate administrantis, sed ex fide et institutione Dei.” With this position he consciously takes a firm stance against ‘Donatist’ interpretations of ministry: a minister may lack the qualities to perform his duties, yet his fallacies have no effect on the truthfulness of the sacraments. Here we encounter a basic dilemma for Puritan ministers. On the one hand they hold the conviction of the necessity of a preaching ministry, but on the other hand they refrained from taking this conviction to its utmost, which would imply a denial of the truthfulness of the English church and its ministry. Greenham, clearly more careful than Cartwright and the Admonitioners, saw this through. However, even Greenham cannot entirely escape its consequences. Parker and Erikson, in an interesting comment, show how Greenham—as did other Puritans—spoke of ‘planting a church’ when establishing a preaching ministry. It suggests that, also for Greenham, a non-preaching ministry could not pass for a true ministry.

In an intriguing passage concerning plagues Greenham offers a glimpse into his stance on the Presbyterian concept of congregational consent. Amidst such crisis, Greenham considers it wise for a congregation to have two ministers, one for the healthy and one for pastoring the sick. Yet he consciously makes the following reservation, “that the opinion bee left free to the people to choose whether they wil have ther ordinary Pastor to minister to whole or to the sick.” Greenham’s acknowledgement of a congregation’s own responsibility in the appointment of its ministry, shows his affiliation with the ideas of Cartwright, as seen above. His position regarding the authority of the state in ecclesial affairs, however, remains a bit vague. There are no comments in this notebook that directly address this issue, but some notes do reveal some preliminary thoughts on distinctiveness of both church and state. In a comment (dated 7 January 1583?) we read:

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287 “When hee spake any good thing privately, hee loved to sift deeper, but more pleasantly at the table and les seriously. And therefore as hee disliked raving and unconstant speeches, soe hee loved to dy his ears to one thing, which hee saw was the most profitable course of speaking. Howbeit if any would interrupt him in his speech, hee would willingly permit him, and carefully hear him, but with this caveat, unto the party, that hee would both insist, in the present subject of conference and yeeld him that courteously, that after hee had finished his owne speeche hee would help his memory in bringing him to that speech again wherein hee had hindered him.” In “The sayings of Richard Greenham,” 192.


289 “The sayings of Richard Greenham,” 151. In a footnote (n88) Parker and Carlson clarify Greenham’s Latin reference as an “interpretative summary of Augustine’s argument against the Donatists, that dramatically alters the meaning of the original text.” For where Augustine in his ‘Against the Letters of Petilianus’ grounds the working of baptism only in the merits of Christ (“sed propter illum qui hunc Baptismum immaculatus instituit,” in “Contra Litteras Petiliani,” 2.35, PL 43:287), Greenham in his rendering thereof apparently also encloses the faith of the baptized.

290 Cf. “In Greenham’s circle a parish without preaching was not a ‘church’. To go to a parish that had no preaching was referred to as ‘planting a church.’” “The sayings of Richard Greenham,” 136 n12.


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Being asked whether a Magistrate being enformed of an offence might conceal it or no, hee said, If a man came to a Magistrate judicially clayming justice, he cold not deny punishment without offence. But if it were told him privately as to a brother in christ to sift out by his wisdome, or to exhort by his counsel, hee was not bound to open or punish it.292

His differentiation between a person’s responsibility as civil officer and as a Christian, though only minutely amplified, reveals some awareness on Greenham’s part of the difference between church discipline and civil procedures. This is not unlike Calvin’s urge for elders to take off their civil decorations (§ 2.3.2.). The language used betrays some debt to the wording of Matthew 18:15-16.293 A similar differentiation reappears when the nonconformity of some of his colleagues is discussed. In an extensive entry (dated on 6 September 1583?), Greenham considers the matter of the wearing of vestments. In response to the conformist claim that the nonconformists’ refusal to wear the outward garment would give a prerequisite to further civil disobedience, Greenham writes the following consideration:

If it bee so lamentable a case, that piety and religion cannot stand, except justice faile, that is if ther cannot bee a not punishing, of such as refuse ceremonies, but ther must bee also a not punishing of others. If justice cannot stand except piety faile, that is if malefactors cannot bee punished, unless ministers refusing the ceremonies bee punished also, the matter is dangerous, for both the church so is like to decay, and the common wealth is like to fal, for if ceremonies bee maintained, and men refusing ceremonies bee punished then the church shal receiv hurt: if malefactors bee suffered to go unpunished, then the common wealth is in some great peril. the one is in evil case for want of pure discipline, the other is in peril for want of civil justice, but surely of both it were better that civil should cease, then piety bee prophained.294

Although it is difficult to establish if this section does in fact renders Greenham’s own opinion, it would further affirm his earlier differentiation between the ecclesial and civil realm. Though both civil justice and ecclesial discipline are both essential to the stability of society, the latter is the greatest and most essential of the two. How limited it might be,
it does indicate that Greenham did have some grasp of the church’s particular responsibility independent of the state.

Another element which appears frequently in Greenham’s diary, is his emphasis on the importance of church discipline. When asked if a private sin should be answered with abstention from the sacraments, he answers that, “without some orderly or further proceeding in discipline, as in making the offenders sin known to the <church>,” somebody cannot be refrained from partaking the sacrament.295 In other words, an ordained minister cannot solely prevent members from partaking without the consultation and notification of the church. As to the necessity to notify the church about somebody’s private sin is, according to Greenham, dependent on the gravity of the offense. The angled brackets surrounding ‘church’ in the quotation above, signify that this word is later inserted for a word which has been crossed out. In this instance, the original was significantly ‘congregation,’ which confirms Greenham’s idea of discipline as a congregational affair.296 It is possible that the authors of the manuscript thought it wise to substitute the sensitive ‘congregation’ for a more neutral term.

As it appears, Greenham broadly followed the main elements of the Presbyterians’ agenda, specifically the preaching ministry and church discipline. However, there are also some comments in which a more conformist position can be discerned. For example, where most Presbyterian Puritans took a firm stance against all ‘popish practices’,297 Greenham considered the risk of disorder worse: “As for such things, Let us do as much as wee can with the peace of the church lest wee make the remedy of the evil wors then the evil it self.”298 Notes of similar substance can be found throughout the book. He also admonishes one who complained about the lack of discipline in the English church, to be thankful for “that discipline wee have.”299 Although Greenham is critical towards ceremonies,300 he subordinated their importance with regard to keeping the peace of the church. As long “the essence of gods worship” was unaffected, “our mixt state of the church . . . could tolerate many things.”301 These examples resemble the ‘adiaphora’ argumentation made by conformists. It is plausible that this tolerating attitude prompted Browne to break with Greenham and determine his own course. In Greenham’s opinion, conversely, reformation was not reached by

296 252.
296 See “The sayings of Richard Greenham,” 187 n222, also 205.
297 In January 1587, William Perkins, preaching in Christ’s College Chapel at Cambridge University, still maintained that kneeling during communion was superstition and anti-Christian. Cf. Blench, Preaching in England, 303.
298 “The sayings of Richard Greenham,” 152.
299 “The sayings of Richard Greenham,” 139.
Anabaptist iconoclasm, strong language or angry pamphleteering. For a minister’s vocation consisted of ‘teaching and not destruction’.302

In a second tract, *A Short Forme of Catechising*, framed as was customary after the Ten Commandments, the Apostolic Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer,303 Greenham presents the clearest and most systematic introduction into his convictions.304 Especially in the late sixteenth century Puritan clergy began to take catechising very seriously, since they realized that the effectiveness of preaching would benefit from a better understanding of the basics of Christian doctrine. It bears the distinctive traits of Ramist methodology congruent with its pedagogical purpose.305 Consistent with what we found in his diary, Scripture is put right at the beginning of Greenham’s catechesis.306 It is God who placed Scripture in the center of his engagement with human beings, and as a norm for Christian thinking and doing. This is further illustrated by his returning phrase “agreeable to Gods Word,”307 to show his dependence on Scripture. Hence, every believer is called “to increase in knowledge for their furtherance in salvation,”308 through private reading of Scripture, and commanded “to heare them read publikely in the church. . . . Because it is the most principall and proper means to beget faith in us.”309 Meaningful is the observation that Greenham first stresses the importance of Scripture and preaching to sustain Christian life, before discussing the ordained ministry itself. Only from the belief that God uses the Scriptures, the role of the “Ministers of Gods word”310 comes into play.311 The placement of ministry right beside other forms of oversight (parents, magistrates and master), resonates well with Greenham’s coupling of the ministerial calling among other callings. A calling is not exclusive to ministerial office. In his explanation of the Apostolic Creed, he gives a definition of ‘the church catholic’ in distinct

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303 The Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer (*Paternoster*) and the Apostolic Creed formed an important part of the personal religion and the catechizing of the laity already in the fifteenth century. Next to Psalms, Hail Mary, and the seven deadly sins, they were incorporated (mostly in Latin and sometimes even in English) in the so-called ‘primers’ or *Books of Hours* (*Horae*), prayer books used by many literate people, including women. See Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400-1580* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2005), 69-87, 209ff.
308 Greenham, “A short forme of Catechising,” 266.
‘Puritan’ language: “That God hath a certain number of his chosen children, which he doth call and gather to himself.”312 Not all baptized, but Gods’ eternal elect, visible in the gathering community, makes up the church. Surprisingly, then, is the absence of discipline in his coming to the meaning of the ‘communion of saints’. Discipline is only mentioned at the end of his explanation of the Apostolic Creed, where he writes that faith is ‘begotten and bred’ by the hearing of the gospel and prayer, and is confirmed by the Sacraments, discipline and affliction.313 Though further explanation is absent, the combination of Sacraments and discipline does suggest the context of an ecclesial community.314

Overall, Greenham’s ministry shows him as a thorough Puritan minister, with a preference for the ideas of the Cambridge Presbyterians. Though he might not have followed the Presbyterians in their rigor and readiness to bring about controversy,315 considering the absence of explicit anti-episcopal language, all central Presbyterian convictions can be found in his thinking: the centrality of preaching,316 the role of the locally embedded minister as its premier interpreter, his favorable acceptance of congregational consent, and church discipline. Certainly with regard to the latter, Greenham was sensible to the difference between church and state. While a reference to Ephesians 4:11 is absent, ordained ministry emerges as an ecclesial yet divine instrument to instruct Christians in God’s Word to live a Christian life. Remarkable is his positive depiction of the church as a ‘gathering community’, stressing the church as meeting of believers bounded by church discipline. Greenham is an example of those ministers who silently implemented Genevan ecclesiology. Hence, the period Browne spent in Greenham’s house have provided him with the opportunity to think through his concerns regarding the Church of England, and further develop his acquaintance with the Presbyterian alternative. At the same time, Greenham’s toleration could have only further stimulated his conviction concerning more profound measures.

2.3.7. Peter Ramus and Cambridge Puritanism

While not directly related to the present theme, it is worthwhile to consider one other phenomenon that arrived in Cambridge in the late 1560’s: Ramist methodology. Peter Ramus’ *Dialectica* became a popular textbook particularly among Cambridge Puritans “because of its supposedly bold independence of Aristotle’s and its attractiveness as a

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314 Cf. “It is apparent, however, that his emphasis on discipline is closely tied to his doctrine of the church. Greenham speaks of this means exclusively in the context of the community of faith, never in terms of personal, individual, self-discipline.” Primus, *Richard Greenham*, 143.
315 The ambivalence that flows from these lines still leaves scholars today uncertain about Greenham’s precise stance within the Elizabethan protestant spectrum. Primus, for example, puts Greenham in the camp of “cooperative Puritanism.” Primus, *Richard Greenham*, 65; cf. Parker, Carlson, *Practical Divinity*, esp. 122-126.
short cut to mastery of the subject." Peter Ramus (Pierre de la Ramée, 1515-1572) was a typical offshoot of sixteenth century Renaissance thought, who advocated a complete reform of the liberal arts. He established his revision of the arts on a restructuring and simplification of Aristotelian logic and rhetoric. Inspired by the work of Rudolphus Agricola (1444-1485), he considered the classical system too vague, confusing and inconsistent, using logic for scientific discourse and rhetoric for popular discourse. Ramus’ reform existed in the assembling of logic and rhetoric, the two classical arts that gave structure to written and oral works, into one system of thought. In contrast with scholastic logic and classic Ciceronian rhetoric, he envisioned logic to be used strictly for the ‘invention’ (inventio) and ‘arrangement’ (dispositio) of arguments, and rhetoric only concerned the ‘delivery’ of arguments. Wilbur Samuel Howell, in his classic Logic and Rhetoric in England (1956), writes, “Ramus decided that schemes and tropes belonged to communicating well, rather than to speaking well.” As such, logic became an instrument in finding truth, and rhetoric an instrument of the transmission of truth, to persuade an audience not willing to accept it. Ramus himself focused on the reformation of scholastic logic (or dialectic), and left rhetoric to his colleague, Omer Talon (Audomarus Talaeus).

Different from medieval scholasticism, Ramus’s logical method is not based on probabilities, but on certainties (axiomata). Ramists used (self-evidencing) axioms instead of syllogisms, which were subsequently analyzed and divided into constitutive parts, or commonplaces (exempla): from definition to division (dichotomies). First the statement of an universal, followed by series of dichotomies, which continued until the

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317 Thompson, Universities in Tudor England, 9-10; also Porter, Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge, 52.


319 Conley, Rhetoric in the European Tradition, 125-128.

320 Howell, Logic and Rhetoric in England, 152.

321 Conley, Rhetoric in the European Tradition, 130.

322 Howell, Logic and Rhetoric in England, 149. Sonnino is quite negative about the Rhetorica of Talon (Talaeus), writing, “it becomes clear that alone it could have done nothing to encourage study of the content and structure of a text . . . Moreover the Rhetorica of Talaeus is unimaginative, derivative and badly written. It must be recognized for what it is, an unsightly appendage to the more elegant form with which Peter Ramus invested traditional logic.” Sonnino, A Handbook to Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric, 7.

last particular had its place on the chart.\textsuperscript{324} Characteristic for Ramist logic is the use of large brackets, visualizing the arrangement of the concepts into large dichotomous tables, sometimes covering whole pages (resembling a genealogical tree). The visual exposition simplified memorization. In the end, the whole idea of such a chart, or ‘tree of logic’, was to offer an orderly presentation of the subject. Wilbur Howell explains the Ramist reformation as an attempt to bring the theory of communication in harmony with the times, “seeking to bring learning into a closer relation with the practical needs.”\textsuperscript{325} He mentions several forces that were behind these changes: first, the failure of older deductive sciences to meet the requirement of a world discovered by empirical observation, so “scholastic logic began to fail as a guide to learned communication.”\textsuperscript{326} Secondly, the rise of a middle class slowly gaining power, changed the political structure, and requested a new rhetoric to convince the commoner. And thirdly, the Reformation changed the status quo of religious conversation, and challenged the suspicion of older rhetoric towards new discoveries.

Interestingly, Ramus’ bridging of theory and praxis gained substantial support among the Cambridge Puritans.\textsuperscript{327} In Cambridge, Ramus was read prominently by Gabriel Harvey (1550-1631), who had to chance to buy a copy in 1569.\textsuperscript{328} Together with Laurence Chaderton (c. 1536-1640)\textsuperscript{329}—who lectured upon Ramus’ \textit{Ars Logica}—Harvey introduced Ramist rhetoric in the late 1560’s and 1570’s. Other adherents were William Temple, William Gouge of King’s College, and, the most celebrated scholar of English Puritanism, William Perkins (1558-1602).\textsuperscript{330} Perkins used Ramistic dichotomous division pervasively in his classic \textit{The Arte of Prophesying} (Lt. 1592; Eng; 1606).


\textsuperscript{325} Howell, \textit{Logic and Rhetoric in England}, 9.

\textsuperscript{326} Howell, \textit{Logic and Rhetoric in England}, 10.


\textsuperscript{328} Howell, \textit{Logic and Rhetoric in England}, 178; and John Charles Adams, “Gabriel Harvey’s \textit{Ciceronianus} and the Place of Peter Ramus’ \textit{Dialecticae libri duo} in the Curriculum,” \textit{RQ} 43, no. 3 (1990): 551-569.


Donald McKim, in his analysis of Perkins’s use of Ramism, mentions several reasons why Puritans felt so attracted toward this practical methodology, which will help us understand its appeal especially in the context of ministry. First, it maintained a more dynamic unity between theology and ethics. For example, Ramus and Perkins both explained theology in terms of good ethical behavior (bene vivendi). Right belief (doctrine) stood in a direct relation to right living (discipline). This connection is particularly apparent in Puritan preaching, which stressed the importance of application to prevent theology from becoming an academic enterprise with no practical value for the church. It is an argument which we already encountered with Richard Greenham. Secondly, Ramist logic was a helpful tool in educational situations; it provided a system in which all arts could be easily memorized by students. Especially since it moved from abstract truth toward concrete reality. From which follows McKim’s third argument, namely the embrace of “plain style” preaching, a three-part structured form of preaching (doctrine, reason and application) which allowed for practical sermons, easier memorization and better hearing. In his study on sermon reception, The Art of Hearing (2010), Arnold Hunt discusses the widespread custom among sermon-goers of developing techniques to improve their hearing skills (‘the art of hearing’), such as taking notes, memorization and self-application. As he explains it, this emphasis on good hearing, flowed from the Puritan concept of preaching which was, far from a mere monologue, envisaged rather as a dialogue. Scripture provided doctrine, which was then reflected on and made concrete for daily life (viz. theologia est doctrina bene vivendi): “it provided clergy with the theoretical framework by which they could stress in their sermons the need for changes in the lives and behavior of a congregation.” In short, Ramist method served the Puritan elevation of the sermon as the primary means of the explanation of God’s Word, “by which the preacher could impart information as well as instruct and correct the lives of the hearers.” The absence of such skilled preachers in the Elizabethan church was the prime reason for the Puritan conferences, known as ‘prophesyings,’ and household seminaries, such as Greenham’s. Patrick Collinson indicates that a Protestant service distinguished itself by sincerity and simplicity, redirecting the parishioners to direct their focus to internal reflection (‘understanding,’ ‘hearing the Word’), thereby correcting the old ways of the English church, known for ceremony and ostentation, which emphasized experiential devotion.

332 See Stephanie Sleeper, “Plain Style,” in Puritans and Puritanism in Europe and America, 2:479-480; also McKim, “The Functions of Ramism in William Perkins’ Theology,” 511; and also Blench, Preaching in England, 57-60.
by liturgical participation. 337 Basically, Ramism suited perfectly with the Puritan understanding of preaching as performative act, which required lively preaching instead of reading homilies, and fostered mental images that stirred the imagination instead of the visual images and ceremonialism. 338 John Rechtien mentions something similar about the preaching of another Cambridge scholar, John Udall (c. 1560-1592): “For Udall, the object of communication had become social formation by means of a conviction taught with the aid of logic rather than persuasion through delightful teaching (docere, delectare, persuadere), the three purposes of traditional rhetoric.” 339 Udall adapted his use of logic per audience, “simplifying the syllogisms and dichotomies of Ramist logic for his parishioners,” which “transformed the sermon into a popularized academic lecture.” 340 Puritan preaching, consistent with Bucer’s idea, 341 was a form of persuasion without coercion, and as such, served as an alternative for violence. 342 Fourthly, McKim argues that the Ramist structuring of knowledge was consistent with Puritan theory of human memory, and thereby making the assistance of images superfluous. Hence, a preacher only required his speech to reach people’s mind. Puritans perceived speech as God’s provision, as a carrier between humans, but ultimately also with God. 343 For God himself used rhetoric in Scripture. Fifth, Ramist logic formed a practical hermeneutical key, as it approached Scripture as a universal truth, to be discovered and further distributed into parts. As such, a passage could be exegeted, and turned into a chart carefully exhibiting the ‘topics’ of the specific text, which as a kind of “one-word summaries” could be very helpful during preaching. 344 Different from previous scholastic methods, Ramist logic enabled Puritans to expose the natural and internal logic of Scripture, seemingly without the need to submit the Biblical text to a foreign philosophical scheme. Donald McKim, in the end, concludes: “It helped him and others give grounding to the interplay of doctrine and life. Ramism offered the vehicle through which God’s truth could be communicated

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341 Amos, “It is Fallow Ground Here;” 48.


for the education and edification of all people. It provided the framework in which preaching was done to challenge the mind and stir the heart.345

The attraction of Ramist methodology among Cambridge Puritans coincided with their understanding of theology and ministry: a focus upon the normativity of Scripture and an emphasis on its practical purposes, specifically in sermons that edified the people. As we will see, particularly in the coming chapter, Browne, like Greenham, made extensive use of Ramist methodology.

2.4. Ordained Ministry in the Context of Cambridge

Our contextual reading of some major events and controversies in Cambridge, particularly in the second half of the sixteenth century, provided valuable insights in the debates over the state of the English church and its ministry. In this paragraph, I will draw some theological motives that characterize the nonconformist context in which Robert Browne was educated as a young scholar and developed his Separatist convictions. These motives will serve as a reference to determine the concept of ordained ministry in Browne’s literature in Chapter 3 which follows this last section.

1. The returning and fundamental conviction that unites and inspires the different controversies during the Elizabethan era is the appeal to absolute normativity of Scripture. This is no surprise, considering how much the intellectual atmosphere at Cambridge was slowly shaped by a Protestant reformation of the curriculum. Instigated by continental thinkers like Erasmus, Bucer, Calvin and others, Cambridge slowly shifted its emphasis from the scholastic authors to Biblical theology, including the ability to read the texts in the original languages. While reformed theology already had arrived in the Henrician times, it managed to gain a more dominant position during the Elizabethan era, in the wake of the returning Marian exiles and their experience on the continent. The influence of the new writers, especially Calvin, generated an intellectual atmosphere in which Scripture was used as the premier source of theological critique toward the status quo of the Church of England. Calvin’s Genevan example, moreover, kindled the rise of the Presbyterians in Cambridge, who fashioned a return to the Church according to more Biblical lines. It was this idea of Biblical authority and supremacy that brought them in conflict with English royal supremacy regarding the ‘indifferent matters’ (adiaphora). In Cartwright’s own summary of his lectures, the legitimacy of ministerial titles is made dependent on whether or not they are mentioned in Scripture. The same goes for the Admonition, in which Field and Wilcox use—not coincidentally—the ancient book of Acts as a divine command in correcting the English church of their present time. Greenham, in a similar manner, roots his entire ministry and education on the text of

Scripture. Presbyterians argued more emphatically than others the need for a Scriptural warrant (‘lawful’)\textsuperscript{346} for the whole substance of the church. The urgency behind this call flows from the direct relation between church polity and salvation (cf. Field and Wilcox’ expression “or else there can be no right religion”),\textsuperscript{347} and thus between ecclesiology and soteriology. In other words, the warranty of Scripture was not merely a case of right exegesis, but also of “assurance of salvation,” as Daniel Eppley states.\textsuperscript{348} Presbyterians believed that Christ in the New Testament prescribed a single pattern for ecclesiology.\textsuperscript{349} This Puritan emphasis on obedience made ecclesiology once more a matter of salvation. Stephen Brachlow retraces the origins of this connection between soteriology and ecclesiology back to John Calvin who, in the last part of his \textit{Institutes}, emphasized the importance of a church constituted on Scripture.\textsuperscript{350} He then concludes that the English Presbyterians diverged from Calvin by applying the so-called \textit{extra ecclesia nulla salus} to the visible membership instead of the invisible. Brachlow furthermore presents this modification of Calvin’s theology as the origin of the voluntaristic nature of the Puritan pursuit as well as the Separatist ecclesiology: “Whereas Calvin emphasized the objective and gracious aspects of the covenant, succeeding English Calvinists, possibly under influence of Tyndale and Zwingli, stressed the ethical implications of the covenant bond.”\textsuperscript{351} Observing this ‘urge’ for Biblical supremacy among Cambridge Presbyterians, it is therefore no surprise to see especially among them a strong appeal toward the Ramist methodology. Ramist thought provided their theological convictions with a practical method to bridge the gap between theology and Christian life and stress the importance of preaching and catechism. What Calvin’s Geneva did for ecclesiology, Ramus’ logic and rhetoric did for preaching: making it more about Scripture. It enabled Puritans to direct their preaching and teaching to the education and spiritual formation of the laity, an explanation and application of the Biblical text.

2. The Presbyterian’s common plea is for the reversal of a hierarchical church to a local parish emphasis: “By placing ecclesiastical authority in each congregation before the authority of the synod or assembly, Presbyterians called for a ‘bottom up’ style of church government.”\textsuperscript{352} They “firmly rejected any form of ministerial authority that had no basis in the local church and envisioned an ecclesiology which incorporated congregational consensus.”\textsuperscript{353} Chaderton even wrote that Cartwright used the wording

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\textsuperscript{346} For this idea of ‘lawfulness’ see Hall, \textit{The Faithful Shepherd}, 12, 24.


\textsuperscript{348} Eppley, “Defender of the Peace,” 322; also Hall, \textit{The Faithful Shepherd}, 24.


\textsuperscript{350} Brachlow, \textit{The Communion of the Saints}, 28-29.

\textsuperscript{351} Brachlow, \textit{The Communion of the Saints}, 31.

\textsuperscript{352} Ha, \textit{English Presbyterianism}, 58.

\textsuperscript{353} Cf. Ha, \textit{English Presbyterianism}, 7: “Their alternative church government began from the bottom up and redefined rather than empowered royal supremacy in the Church by circumscribing it along consensual lines.”
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‘tyrannical’ for the episcopal hierarchy, a word which had appeared earlier in the vestments controversy. This emphasis became most evident in their appropriation of the idea of congregational consent, and thus the inclusion of the laity in the government of the church through the involvement of the plurality of voices. This became particularly manifest in the responsibility of local parishes to elect and appoint their own ministers by the joint agreement of local parishioners. It was a premier aspect in Cartwright’s Lectures and in his letter to Harrison, and both agree with the Admonition when Greenham speaks favorably about congregational consent. Of course all of this most fervently puts the whole episcopal structure of the Church of England upside down, for this new conviction recognizes the local congregation as an ecclesial ‘authority’. Not the episcopal license, but the ‘consent’ of the church should accompany a ‘true minister’. This also explains why Presbyterians rejected the practice of plurality of benefices, as was quite common among bishops.354 James Spalding accurately explains: “Though the Puritans of the Admonitions are rightly called ‘Presbyterians’, it should be remembered that the key presbytery is not an area group but the pastor with his elders governing the local congregation.”355 Therefore, ordination was a combination of the congregational election (‘calling’) and the ‘laying on of hands’ by the elders. As such, ministerial ordination was a firm expression of the congregational basis of ministerial authority.356 Ordained ministry should be embedded first and foremost in a local congregation. It is furthermore significant to mention that our readings in Presbyterian literature of the 1570-1580’s, only sparingly reveals concern for ecclesial polity beyond the local church. Thus, as Polly Ha explains, Presbyterians initially were preoccupied with church government on the local level, yet assuming that supra-local structures would follow automatically.357 Nonetheless, this preoccupation with the local church does show the Presbyterians’ priority.

3. The emphasis on Biblical supremacy suddenly made Scripture the main substance of ordained ministry. Rosemary O’Day speaks of a real “educational revolution.”358 Under influence of continental Reformed theology, English Presbyterians literally ‘stripped’ the parish clergy of its priestly garment, to be dressed with academic gown of divinity instead. Ordained ministry became first and foremost ‘a ministry of the Word.’359 Simultaneously it changed the local congregation in active learners instead of

355 Spalding, “Restitution as a Normative Factor for Puritan Dissent,” 60-61.
357 See Ha, English Presbyterianism, 48-49. She observes that the authority of synods and the universal church became a theme of debate in the early seventeenth century in Presbyterians’ exchange with Congregationalists such as Henry Jacob (8-9).
358 O’Day, English Clergy, 2; also Seaver, Puritan Lectureships, 6, 16, 43.
passive recipients of homilies. The administration of the sacraments came second. In opposition to a priestly ministry that perceives ministers in terms of mediators, Presbyterians understood the preaching ministry in terms of ambassadors of Christ. Remarkable is the recurring role for Ephesians 4:11-12 (“And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry”) in the development of reformed thinking upon the ordained ministry. It is used generally to root the reformed concept of the preaching ministry in Scripture as Christ’s gift to his community, in order to provide in its nourishment. Depending on the context, however, it serves to prevent the ordained ministry from evaporation or elitism, to emphasize the ministry’s distinctive educational responsibility, or to argue for the importance of the local imbedding of ministry over against hierarchical concepts of the same. As such, ordained ministers were servants of the people to teach and guide them by way of explanation of the Scripture, predominantly in sermons but also in personal encounters. This coherence between preaching and pastoral ministry is notably present in Greenham’s pastoral care. Significant is his differentiation between a minister’s vocation and his ability. Ministry did not only require ordination, but also sufficient spiritual and pastoral formation. If ordained ministry is exclusively tied to the audible and vivid communication of the authority of the Bible in preaching (cf. fides ex auditu, Rom. 10:14), ministers needed to be competent to exegete the Scriptures and deliver practical sermons. As Paul Seaver writes, “Preaching accordingly required long years of training.” The rise of household seminaries by Puritans, such as Greenham’s, served exactly this purpose: providing English parishes with able preachers who could apply Scripture to the lives of their parishioners. This distinction between reading and preaching consequently became a dividing line between conformists and Puritans, writes Arnold Hunt. He argues that ‘Precisionists’ understood preaching in a performative way, as a dramatic ‘event’ in which the meaning of Scripture was conveyed, not primarily in the transmission of information, but rather emerged “from an act of interpretative collaboration between preacher and audience.” Through the voice of the preacher, people, in a way, encountered the immediate word of God. The emphasis on the immediacy of the preached Word is also found in the practice of ‘prophesying’, and the close association of preaching with prophecy. Therefore, ‘bare reading’ did not suit the divine task to which ministers were ordained. This was a cry already apparent in Bucer’s

360 Hence, the increasing note-taking and sermon repetition among lay parishioners, see particularly Hunt, The Art of Hearing, esp. 60-116.
361 Seaver, The Puritan Lectureships, 6; also Hunt, The Art of Hearing, 15.
362 See Hunt, Art of Hearing, 20-42.
363 Hunt, The Art of Hearing, 16, and esp. 81-94.
364 Cf. David C. Steinmetz, Taking the Long View: Christian Theology in Historical Perspective (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 83: “To the extent they were intent on hearing that voice, they considered themselves less as scribes, custodians of a Word once spoken in the past, than as prophets, servants of a Word freshly spoken to their own generation.”
evaluation of the English reformation and continued most emphatically by Elizabethan Puritans: “The godly preachers of the Elizabethan Church believed that preaching was the spearhead of the Reformation: that if only the people could be exposed to the converting power of the Word—that is, the Word preached, not merely the Word read—all else would follow.” Without actual preachers sent by Christ to his church, whose preaching made ‘separation between godly and ungodly,’ faith could not be bred and the church could not be build. Of course, due to this stress on the constitutive role of a preaching ministry, the threat of Donatism looms large over Presbyterian ecclesiology.

4. Though absent in the reports about Cartwright’s lectures, Presbyterians generally urged for ecclesial discipline. The elevation of discipline as a ‘third mark’ of the true church was already mentioned by Richard Fitz, and formed a major argument in the Admonition. It should be understood as a direct critique of the English bishops and their ecclesiastical courts. Paul Avis therefore calls the “obsession with discipline” a distinctive of “radical ecclesiology.” True discipline was not a matter of enforcement: Presbyterians argued, but of voluntary local discipline. Cartwright did not include the need for church discipline in his epistolary debate with Whitgift, where he defended the Admonition’s call, accusing Whitgift of speaking “as though matters of discipline and kind of government were not matters necessary to salvation, and of faith.” Coherent with the above ‘turn to the local church’ and the voluntary nature of discipline is the idea of the church as a ‘gathering of believers’ with is expressed in both the Admonition and the by Greenham in his catechesis. This Puritan emphasis on voluntary obedience made ecclesiology once more a matter of salvation. Salvation itself was not explained as a result of human effort, but it did require discipline as a necessary ethical ‘means’ to show salvation. Church discipline supported the conviction among the Admonitioners, as with Cartwright, that the state—the civil authorities—were not necessary to bring people to obedience to God.

5. Where Martin Bucer emphatically aimed to design a reformed church of England including royal supremacy, the reception of Calvin’s theology provided nonconformists with an ecclesiological model in which the lines between church and state were more clearly demarcated. This differentiation between both realms and their respective responsibilities is notably apparent in the vestments controversy, nor in the

366 Cf. Ha, English Presbyterianism, 36: “Indeed, the presbyterian argument for the complete abolition of the episcopacy was driven by an alternative vision of church discipline.”
367 Avis, The Church in the Theology of the Reformers, 55.
arguments made by Cartwright, Field and Wilcox. In the center of this discussion is the role and responsibility of the local ministry to act upon his God-given ordination to bring reformation irrespective of state laws. Moreover, their ideas of ministerial equality, congregational consent and local discipline only showed to be major threats to the structure of the national Church of England. Especially in the Admonition the Presbyterians were pushing limits. Not only did they rebel against the mingling of civil and ecclesiastical offices, but also the very idea of separation was already hinted at. “Torn between an actual state of schism and their devotion to the Calvinist ideal of a Christian society in which the godly magistrate underwrote the discipline of the Church,” writes Patrick Collinson, “they conducted themselves sometimes like separatists, sometimes like tenacious if aggrieved members of the establishment”. Still, similar traces of a distinction between church and state can also be seen in Greenham. Of course this certainly does not imply a rejection of the national church, nor of royal supremacy as such, but it does show that among Puritans, even among the more moderates, a differentiation was made between ecclesial and civil matters as two distinct, but related, realms in one ‘godly society’. A nuanced position that is carefully formulated by Polly Ha in her study English Presbyterianism (2011): “Thus the Presbyterians stressed the separation of Church and State by condemning the exercise of civil punishment and offices by bishops, but in speaking to magistrates they described the close cooperation of the minister and the magistrate in establishing a godly society.” In short, sixteenth century English Presbyterianism was caught in an ambiguous position, between allegiance to the queen’s royal supremacy and their rejection of the very episcopal structure that supported her rule on the basis of the divine authority of Scripture.

2.5. Conclusions
The present chapter first traced the life of Robert Browne, which revealed a close relation to the events at Cambridge University in the 1570’s, the rise of the Presbyterian Puritans, and Richard Greenham’s household seminary. The subsequent goal of this chapter was to draw Browne’s theological context to be able to analyze and assess his thoughts against the background of his time. Therefore we examined some major influences which helped shape the intellectual atmosphere of Cambridge University, especially in relation to ordained ministry. Our contextual reading has shown that the biblical reorientation at Cambridge during the sixteenth century prepared soil for a more critical stance toward church and state. Especially in the Elizabethan era, Cambridge was surrounded by an air of nonconformity. The Presbyterian pursuit essentially meant a total upheaval of the episcopal structure, and was, not surprisingly, considered subversive to established

371 See also Avis, The Church in the Theology of the Reformers, 147-148.
373 Ha, English Presbyterianism, 40.
English church. Ringleaders such as Cartwright, Field and Wilcox may have found themselves, at least in the early 1570’s, at the more radical end of Presbyterianism, than the moderate Richard Greenham did. Nevertheless, besides their differences in approach and tone, their ecclesiological ideas were essentially not that different. They all advocated a preaching ministry supported by, and embedded within, a local congregation, appointed by an interplay of congregational election and elderly ordination. Except for their deliberate nonconformity with regard to the view and exercise of their ministry, they nonetheless sought to work out their Presbyterian convictions in different ways within the limited space of the English church. David Hoyle sums up the ambivalence with which these Presbyterians operated within the Church of England well: “Though sometimes tempted by their longing for further reformation, and perhaps a little seduced by dreams of a congregation made up only of the elect, they would not separate themselves from the national church.”

374 Hoyle, Reformation and Religious Identity in Cambridge, 56.
Chapter 3

ORDAINED MINISTRY IN BROWNE’S SEPARATIST LITERATURE (1582-1585):
A THEOLOGY OF COVENANT

3.1. Introduction

Chapter 2 described the theological context in which Robert Browne was educated. We looked at some major developments and controversies which shaped the intellectual atmosphere of his day, particularly at his alma mater, the University of Cambridge. In this third chapter we will analyze Browne’s own literature, and determine his theological position within the spectrum of the sixteenth-century controversy regarding ordained ministry: What are Browne’s main conflicts? With whom was he in dialogue? And what were his foremost arguments in relation to his thoughts on church and ordained ministry? This chapter will thereby enable us to answer the questions we’ve established in § 1.5.6. and, henceforth, will form the main source for reviewing present day perspectives. The documents examined in the following paragraphs—§ 3.2. to § 3.6—are the five texts which Robert Browne wrote during his Separatist years, all dated between 1582 and 1585, and all concerned with issues surrounding church and ordained ministry. They have been reprinted in the second volume of the series Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts (ENCT), edited by Albert Peel and Leland H. Carlson, published in 1953.1 Our analysis will follow the order of Browne’s writing, and study his argumentation both intertextual as intra-textual, as a systematic-theological study requires. Afterwards, in § 3.7., I will briefly discuss the major ecclesiological themes in relation to the state of research on Browne, as set out earlier in § 1.5. Then, I will establish Browne’s concept of ordained ministry in the form of his systematic contributions to contemporary debate in § 3.8. Finally, I will draw my conclusions upon which the first part of this study will be fulfilled.

3.2. A Treatise of reformation without tarying for anie (1582)

Robert Browne published his first pamphlet in 1582 after his flight to Middelburg. It appeared together with his two other major writings, A Treatise on the 23. of Matthewe and A booke which sheweth the life and manners of all true Christians, which will be discussed below.2 All three documents were originally printed in Middelburg by the

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1 Not all Browne’s publications will be subject of research, first because not all have survived, and secondly because of some its authorship is uncertain. For a list of Browne’s postulated writings, see Champlin Burrage, The True Story of Robert Browne (1550?-1633): Father of Congregationalism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1906), 74-75.

2 Usually these three documents are found in one band, although be it in different order (cf. Keith L. Sprunger, Dutch Puritanism: A History of English and Scottish Churches of the Netherlands in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries [SHCT, vol. 31; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1982], 31 n84). Although Champlin Burrage thinks this pamphlet to be a section of Browne’s the larger work, A booke which sheweth the life and manners of all true Christians (cf. Champlin Burrage, The
prominent Dutch printer Richard Schilder(s), and soon distributed in England despite significant efforts of Steward William of Orange to suppress them. The expenses for covering the printing were probably provided by Robert Harrison. While A Treatise of reformation without tarying for anie is Browne’s best known and most referenced work, it is certainly not his largest. With only 19 pages in the critical edition, its size is comparatively small. Yet, possibly due to its manageable dimensions and appealing title it quickly became the representative cry of the Separatist case, and in modern times celebrated as “one of Congregationalism’s foundational documents.” It is essentially a short and powerful apology in defense of the Separatist cause, especially in conversation with the so called ‘tarrying clergymen’. It should be taken in account, as David Como reminds us, that it was quite common among radical Puritans to attack and criticize the hesitant attitude of fellow Puritans. In Browne’s case, the ideal audience existed most

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4 This is suggested by Browne’s contemporary and antagonist Stephen Bredwell in his hostile tract Raising the Foundations of Brownism (1588), see Sprunger, Dutch Puritanism, 31.


7 See David R. Como, “Radical Puritanism, c. 1558-1660,” in The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism, eds. John Coffey, and Paul H. Lim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 245; cf. “The literary controversies with served to define Separatism were conducted, not with the bishops or other official spokesmen for the establishment, but with fellow-puritans.” Patrick Collinson, “Towards a Broader Understanding of the Early Dissenting Tradition,” in The Dissenting Tradition: Essays for Leland H. Carlson, eds. C. Robert Coole, and Michael E. Moody (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1979), 19. These ‘preachers of the gospel’ are those ministers who opposed the Elizabethan Settlement, but refused to act accordingly and received their ordination and license out of the hands of the bishops. Cf. Christopher Hill, Society
likely out of those Cambridge Presbyterians who initially stood up for further reformation, but after Cartwright’s expulsion from Cambridge and the incarceration of Field and Wilcox, did no longer “follow him into the paths of ecclesiastical agitation and public controversy,” to use the words of William Haller. Therefore, rather than a mere tract of rebellion and division, it should be read as an apology and explanation of the Separatist position towards and over against his Presbyterian ‘peers’.

### 3.2.1. The Authority of Elizabeth is ‘Civil’

The pamphlet opens with a reiteration of the most important allegations made against Browne’s address and his Separatist group: that they would bear evil will to Queen Elizabeth and England, forsake and condemn the church of God, and discredit and bring in contempt the preachers of the gospel. Browne subsequently uses these charges to structure his own apologetic argument. He first aims to remove the suspicion of subversive Anabaptism, and secondly to justify and explain his ‘Separatist’ ecclesiology, and thirdly to denounce those Puritan ministers who wait (‘tarry’) for the civil authorities to implement a protestant ecclesiology. Because of their hesitance, Browne turns the tables on them, now confronting them with the consequences of their previous call for reformation:

> To aunswere them, we say, That they are the men which trouble Israel, and seeke euill to the Prince, and not we. And that they forsake and condemne the Church and not we. . . . But for the Magistrate, howe farre by their authoritie or without it, the Church must be builded and reformation made, and whether anie open wickednesse must be to llerated in the Church because of them, let this be our aunswere. For chieflie in this point they haue wrought vs great trouble, and dismayed manie weakelings from imbracing the trueth. We say therefore, and often haue taught, concerning our Soueraigne Queene Elizabeth, that neither the Pope, nor other Popeling, is to haue anie authoritie ouer her, or ouer the Church of God, and that the Pope of Rome is Antichrist, whose kingdome ought vtterlie to be taken away. Agayne we say, that her Authoritie is ciuil, and that power she hath as highest under God within her Dominions, and that ouer all persons and

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9 The terminology of ‘tarrying’ is present in the attachment to the first Admonition, known as A View of Popische Abuses, see Frere and Douglas, Puritan Manifestoes, 31.
causes. By that she may put to death all that deserve it by Lawe, either of the Church or common Wealth, and none may resist Her or the Magistrates under her by force or wicked speaches, when they execute the lawes.10

On a first level, he plainly wishes to show his allegiance to England and Protestant religion. Not only does he acknowledge Elizabeth’s supremacy in all matters of state, he also joins in the widespread antipathy for the pope of Rome. It should be remembered that the hatred of Roman-Catholicism was one of the most uniting elements within Elizabethan England.11 Hence, his denial of papal authority is an implicit acknowledgement of the legitimacy of Henry VIII’s break with Rome. So doing, Browne firmly distances himself from anti-Elizabethan sections in English society threatening internal security.12 On a second level, however, Browne carefully limits the royal power to only civil affairs, excluding the realm of the church and thus disavowing the medieval concept of corpus Christianum that stood for a theocratic synthesis of church and commonwealth.13 The careful distinction between the civil and ecclesial realm, found earlier in the vestments controversy, the Admonition to the Parliament, and with Richard Greenham (§ 2.3.3.-2.3.6.), has become in Browne’s argument a more direct critique of Elizabeth as ‘Supreme Governor’, and more importantly, an argument for the responsibility of parish ministers to bring further reformation, independent of civil permission. It was for this reason that John Coppin and Elias Thacker, who dispersed Browne’s writings in England, were hanged in 1583. Stephen Chavura, in a recent study of Tudor political theory, therefore portrayed Browne, together with the Puritan majority, as a representative of a kind of proto-republicanism turning against royal

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10 See Robert Browne, “A Treatise of reformation,” in The Writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Browne, 152. In Browne’s day “[a]ll the parties agreed that the pope was the Antichrist. All of them hated popery” (Peter Lake, Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982], 287). Earlier William Tyndale typified the workings of Antichrist as the counter force of Christ’s rule, threatening the church and leading them astray (see his The Obdience of a Christian Man, 1528). It mainly served to generate “an activist, reforming attitude” among clergy and laypeople (Peter Lake, “The Significance of the Elizabethan Identification of the Pope as Antichrist,” JEH 31, no. 2 [1980]: 161-178).


12 Browne’s pronounced loyalty to Elizabeth and her rightful claim on the English throne must be understood against the persistent fear of revolt, fueled by the earlier rise of English Catholics, known as ‘The Northern Rebellion’ (1569), and the papal bull against Elizabeth’s reign, Regnans in excelsis (1570), which absolved all English Catholics from obedience to Elizabeth. This was an important factor among English Protestants to be committed to prove the legitimacy of Elizabeth’s reign, see Dickens, The English Reformation, 366; and Stephen A. Chavura, Tudor Protestant Political Thought 1547-1603 (SHCT, no. 155; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 75-76, 143, 178-179. For Elizabethan Roman Catholicism, see Kenneth Hyson-Smith, The Churches in England from Elizabeth I to Elizabeth II, vol. 1 1558-1688 (London: SCM Press, 1996), 77-92.

absolutism. In view of Browne’s distinction between the civil and the ecclesial realm, he might be right, especially considering the reception of Browne’s idea of common consent in the seventeenth century. However, he overstates Browne’s own political interest. For, as said, Browne’s own concern is predominantly with ecclesiological issues, not with political theory. His argument, once more, is not directed toward the state, but to the English clergy. Though it is clear that alongside his critique of the state of the English church a firm protest is made against royal interference in ecclesial matters, his protest remained fully in line with the long standing tradition of obedience to ‘the godly prince’. According to Ryan Reeves, this ‘doctrine of obedience,’ once presented by William Tyndale, was deeply rooted within English society. Browne’s acknowledgement of the queen’s supremacy ‘in all matters of state’ is fully in accord with this doctrine, and nowhere does his argument resemble the resistance theory of Protestant authors like Christopher Goodman, John Ponet, or John Knox. Something Chavura affirms as well, when he writes that Browne “stated Elizabeth’s civil authority more clearly than most, emphasising her *ius gladii*.“ Regrettably, he has not fully incorporated the implications in his evaluation of Browne’s ideas. For even Browne’s rejection of royal supremacy is fully in agreement with the mentioned doctrine of obedience. As Reeves explains, this ‘doctrine of obedience’ teaches that Christians were to obey the monarch as a divine ruler (cf. Ps. 82:6), though remain passively disobedient (non-resistant) when commanded things contrary to Scripture. He therefore urges us “to distinguish resistance theory

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15 See for example William Tyndale, “The Obedience of a Christian Man,” in *The Works of the English and Scottish Reformers: The works of Tyndale*, ed. Thomas Russell (3 vols.; London: Ebenezer Palmer, 1828), 2:213: “[t]he King is in this world without law, and may at his lust do right or wrong, and shall give accounts, but to God only.” C.S. Lewis understands Tyndale’s work to be an example of the naturalization of the idea of monarchial sovereignty (based upon the idea of divine right), making rebellion in all situations sinful (see his *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama* [The Oxford History of English Literature, vol. 3; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954], 48-49; also Chavura, *Tudor Protestant Political Thought*, 48). For an elaborate explanation of the idea of the godly prince in reformation theology, see Avis, *The Church in the Theology of the Reformers*, 131-150.
16 See Ryan M. Reeves, *English Evangelicals and Tudor Obedience, c.1527-1570* (SHCT, no. 167; Leiden: Brill, 2014), esp. 25-60, 195-198. Reeves has shown in his study that the development of this doctrine of obedience should not be entirely attributed to Tyndale’s *Obedience*, but also to the introduction of the Swiss interpretation of Psalm 82:6 (“I said, ‘You are “Gods”’)
18 Chavura, *Tudor Protestant Political Thought*, 207. The *ius gladii* is derived from Rom. 13:4 (“for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason”).
19 See for the effects of royal supremacy upon the English church the study of Daniel Eppley, *Defending Royal Supremacy and Discerning God’s Will in Tudor England* (St Andrews Studies in Reformation History; Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), esp. 5-18.
20 See Chavura, *Tudor Protestant Political Thought*, 58-59; and particularly Reeves, *English Evangelicals and Tudor Obedience*, esp. 16, 194-195. The image drawn by Reeves reveals how the interpretation of obedience in English Protestantism developed from staunch defenders of royal supremacy (for example Thomas Cranmer) into a Puritan ‘version’ in which obedience and nonviolence take the shape of ‘passive disobedience’. Passive disobedience allowed
from opposition to the king’s policies,” for “[h]istorians have been too quick to conflate ‘obedience’ with ‘quietism’.” Following the same principle, Browne is able to both applaud Elizabeth’s authority in civil matters yet also criticize her role as ‘Supreme Governor’ when superseding the authority of Scripture. A position earlier taken by John Hooper in his debate with Nicholas Ridley, and ultimately also by John Field and Thomas Wilcox in the first Admonition (§ 2.3.5.). In order to understand Browne’s position, we should adopt Reeves’s distinction between ‘active resistance,’ meaning rebellion and revolt, and ‘passive disobedience’. Browne’s argument undoubtedly fits the latter, refraining from any form of violent resistance, even ready to endure persecution and suffering for his ideas himself, as we saw in his biography (§ 2.2.).

As said, Browne’s real discontent is aimed at those clergymen “which will not doe the duties of Pastors and teachers” until forced thereto by the magistracy. According to Browne, these preachers have surrendered their spiritual responsibility to civil rulers, by their reluctance to pursue church discipline. And so, he asks rhetorically, “doe they not pull downe the heade of Christe Jesus, to sett vppe the hande of the Magistrate?” The English bishops have become instruments of civil rule by the discharging of lawful preachers, while “the Lorde God haue giuen them a charge for to speake.” Herewith, Browne takes up the argument against the mingling of civil and ecclesiastical offices as defended earlier in Cartwright’s lectures (§ 2.3.4). But he now uses it as a critique of those parochial clergymen who ignored their divine vocation in order to satisfy civil authorities. It is evident that Browne developed a sense of separation of church and state affairs when he calls civil authorities to submit to their pastors and nonconformist Protestants to ignore unbiblical demands and laws, yet without ending up in open rebellion. In the case they were forced to do evil, a Christian had to refuse, but face its consequences with forbearance.

21 Reeves, English Evangelicals and Tudor Obedience, 196.
23 See John H. Primus, The Vestments Controversy: An Historical Study of the Earliest Tensions within the Church of England in the Reigns of Edward VI and Elizabeth (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1960), esp. 16-34; also Reeves, English Evangelicals and Tudor Obedience, 122-123. It is true that although Hooper never went so far as to deny royal supremacy, he did in fact subordinated the crown to the authority of Scripture, and defended passive disobedience with regards to the wearing of vestments.
24 Cf. Reeves, English Evangelicals and Tudor Obedience, esp. 165-194, 172. Though Reeves does not mention Browne’s name, he does refer to title of the present book: “While evangelicals still taught obedience, some began to advance new concerns that church leaders need not ‘larry for the magistrate.’” (172).
leave them with ecclesial matters. For civil rulers are to be no more than regular members when it comes to the church.²⁹ We already found a similar argument in the Admonition (§ 2.3.5.). Browne, however, takes it a step further, when he declares that the unwillingness of most pastors to “guide and reforme it aright” signifies a negligence on their part to discern their own vocation.³⁰ To Browne, the Puritan protest against the civil interference with church affairs, both in secret and in public, remained insufficient as long as it was not met with the disciplinary act of separation, “whiche is to cut them of[f] from the Church.”³¹ It shows that Browne’s apology is specifically aimed at those Puritans who support and seek further reformation, but refrain from fulfilling their vocation without civil permission.

3.2.2. ‘Not tarying for anie’

By their reluctance to take action, however, these Puritan preachers have relinquished “the Keyes of the Kingdome of heauen to binde and lose.”³² It is the common term, taken from Matthew 16 and 18, to describe the authority given by Christ to exercise church discipline. To Browne this reluctance signified a downright disobedience to Christ, and enough reason to pose that these preachers “haue no right to call them selues the Church of God, or lawfull Pastors thereof.”³³ Browne uses the Puritan concept of lawfulness’ which we encountered in the previous chapter, to denote its correspondence with Biblical prescription.³⁴ For Browne the church was identical or largely overlapping with the Kingdom of God. A conviction that motivated him of the urgency of his present cry: “not tarying for anie.”³⁵ As Christ’s kingdom is not of this world, his rule cannot be hold by earthly rulers, including even the queen’s bishops.³⁶ Again Browne hammers down the distinctive roles of church and state within the world. Where earthly rulers come first in matters of the common wealth, “yet haue they no ecclesiasticall authoritie at all, but onely as anie other Christians.”³⁷ Following this line of thought, Browne explains ‘tarrying’ as

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²⁹ Browne, “A Treatise of reformation,” 154. Reeves mentions an earlier example of a similar differentiation between ecclesiastical and civil authorities, John Aylmer’s An harborrowe for faithful and trew subjects (1559). Reeves, English Evangelicals and Tudor Obedience, 179.


nothing else than the surrender of ministerial authority to earthly rulers, while a minister’s true legitimation comes from his divine calling.

In response to the ‘Erastian claim’ that, since the England was led by a godly prince, Elizabeth was also to be obeyed in ecclesial matters, Browne takes his current argument a step further. He explains the present disappointment among Puritans, due to the queen’s unwillingness to bring further reformation, as mere hypocrisy. For they blame the civil authorities yet refrain from taking up their God-given responsibility. Under reference to the parables of the pearls and the swine (Mat. 7:6) and the hand and the plow (Luk. 9:62), Browne disqualifies anyone who tarries, now directly turning toward his readers: “For ye set aloft mans authoritie aboue Gods, and the Preacher must hang on his sleeue for the discharge of his calling.” Browne uses an unfamiliar saying, which bears close resemblance to the expression: ‘to wear something on one’s sleeve,’ meaning ‘to give public testimony of’ Browne’s version seems to imply the opposite, as in ‘to refrain from giving public testimony of’. This interpretation suits the context well, since Browne accuses Puritan preachers for neglecting to bring about their convictions and reform the outward church. By the unwillingness to bring reform, these preachers have ‘signed’ their public resignation.

Browne uses two arguments to state his claim. First he appeals to four passages from Scripture, which illustrate the divine right of the ministerial calling over against magisterial authority. The young Elihu, Job’s fourth interlocutor in the eponymous Book of Job, who interfered on the basis of his calling and not because of any title received by a human authority. Second, the words of Jesus himself, “that the Preachers nowe in his kingdome, have greater authoritie than John Baptist.” Third, the prophet Jeremiah, who was set over the nations and the kingdoms of his day. And finally, as the civil authorities could not displace and discharge the “Apostles from their office & calling, no more can they doo lawfull Pastours and Preachers.” These examples provide Browne with sufficient Scriptural warrant to argue that the ministerial calling originates in the divine.

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38 See Browne, “A Treatise of reformation,” 156. Polly Ha points toward the ambivalent position taken by many Presbyterians, conjoining their criticism with respect towards the royal supremacy on the assumption that the prince was Christian and Protestant (see Ha, English Presbyterianism, 13-20). The idea that the state is supreme in ecclesial matters, especially concerning disciplinary procedures, is closely linked with the name of Thomas Erastus (1523-1583), a Swiss phycian and theologian who became known for his theses on church discipline Explicatio gravissima quaestionis. The first edition was written around 1569, yet published posthumously in a extended version in 1589 (see Charles D. Gunnoe, Thomas Erastus and the Palatinate: A Renaissance Physician in the Second Reformation [BSCH, no. 48; Leiden: Brill, 2011], esp. 177-192, and 388-394; and Avis, The Church in the Theology of the Reformers, 142-143). According to John New it was Erastian influence that distinguished Anglican doctrine from Puritan thought, see John F. H. New, Anglican and Puritan: The Basis of their Opposition 1558-1604 (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1964), 45.


40 The first recorded example of this phrase is found in William Shakespeare’s Othello (1604), Act 1, Scene 1, 63: But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve.” In The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works, eds. Richard Proutfoot, Ann Thompson, and David Scott Kastan (London: Bloomsbury, [1998], 2011): 943.


will,\(^43\) independent of the authority of the civil magistracy. Frederick Powicke’s assessment of Browne—as an ‘Erastian Congregationalist’ who preferred civil ruling above the bishop’s—is therefore far off. Preachers were to pursue further reformation regardless of civil law, oppression, or interference. For Browne, the ministerial calling is essentially a divine commission on the condition of human obedience. This strong adherence to the divine will as source of authority fits within the broader development within English society in which the medieval notion of society, as a natural and fixed universe, was substituted for a more dynamic concept rooted in the free and sovereign will of God.\(^44\)

The second argument against the authority of the state in ecclesial affairs is Browne’s concept of freedom of conscience, which safeguarded the freedom of all Christians against enforced religion. Browne writes,

> And this freedome haue all Christians, that they consider what is lawfull and what is profitable, what they may doo and what is expedient, and in no case bee brought vnder the power of anyie thing, as Paule teacheth vs. . . . For if either Magistrate or other would take that from vs, wee must not giue place by yeelding vnto them, no, not for an houre, and this libertie is the free vse of our callings and guiftes, as we see most agreeing to the worde of God, and expedient for his glorie.\(^45\)

With this appeal to freedom of conscience, Browne pushes forward the notion of the sanctity of one’s conscience. Certainly among Puritans, who confessed the sovereignty of God’s will, an awareness was growing of the sanctity of human conscience over against

\(^{43}\) Cf. “For as God hath distributed to euery man the gifte (saieth the Scripture) as the Lorde hath called euery one, so let him walke, and so ordained Paul the Churches. If then the Magistrate will commande the Souldeiour to be a Minister, or the Preacher to give ouer his calling, and chaunge it for an other, they ought not to obeye him, for they haue not the gifte, and God hath called them this way rather then that.” Browne, “A Treatise of reformation,” 158.

\(^{44}\) See Chavura, *Tudor Protestant Political Thought*, 39-88. He describes a development from the medieval concept of social order as an immutable universe (‘Great Chain of Being’) to a more dynamic concept linked with the contingent providence of God. This shift is partly attributed to the influence of continental reformed theology, particularly Calvin. In this way, aberration of the natural order was no longer necessarily harmful, for disorder could be equally ordained by God. Especially Puritans and Separatists regarded “present order as secondary in importance to the true [biblical, JMA] way of doing things” (84).

all kinds of enforced oaths, particularly in matters of religion. It is significant that Browne pleads for the freedom of conscience not on the basis of natural law, but solely on biblical grounds speaking to the individual’s conscience. In Puritan literature the individual’s conscience is often brought forward as the locus where true faith is born, and was therefore considered sacred. Hence, Browne’s argument:

So the it is an abuse of my guifte and calling, if I cease preaching for the Magistrate, when it is my calling to preach, yea & woe unto me, if I preach not, for necessitie is laied vpon me, and if I doe it unwillinglie, yet the dispensation is committed vnto me. And this dispensation did not the Magistrate give me, but God by consent and ratifying of the Church, and therefore as the Magistrate gaue it not, so can he not take it away.

In sharp words Browne explains his refusal to refrain from preaching as act of obedience to God. Since a calling is a ‘divine thing’, one cannot be hold accountable by the magistracy, nor abstained by state laws, since it is the church to which Christians are accountable. It is the local church that through its recognition and affirmation (‘consent’) ‘channels’ God’s dispensation, or Christ’s charge to people. Thus, if the civil authorities would use force to withhold Browne from preaching, they would only further disqualify themselves as Christians, and justify Browne’s disobedience in spiritual matters: “howe then should my office in the Church depende on him which is none of the Church?”

Every attempt of civil authorities to prevent the lawful preacher is an attempt “to put downe the Lordes authoritie, and to stoppe the mouthes of his messengers.” Interesting on this point is Browne’s use of the terminology of messengers to specify the role of preachers within God’s ruling. In the Elizabethan era royal messengers were still a common diplomatic instrument. Ever since medieval times, the British kings made extensive use of envoys who were made responsible for a truthful conveyance if messages across the nation and abroad. Browne uses the same image to explain his idea of the

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46 Cf. Hill, Society and Puritanism, 398-408. C.S. Lewis reports that these kind of appeals to the liberty of conscience were heard only by isolated voices, among whom he includes Robert Browne, and therefore relativizes their influence (particularly Browne’s), as “exceptions which “must not obscure the general picture.” (English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, 40-41). For the relation between ‘free choice’ and ‘God’s will’ in the reformed tradition, see Willem J. van Asselt, et al., Reformed Thought on Freedom: The Concept of Free Choice in Early Modern Reformed Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), esp. 15-49.

47 The shift towards a more biblical rationale, especially among Puritans (“the Prophesying Movement”) and Separatists, in English Protestantism has been noted by Stephen Chavura. He contends however, that this stronger orientation on Scripture was not an altogether dismissal of natural law as such, but more a plea for the sufficiency of the Biblical texts. See Chavura, Tudor Protestant Political Thought, 89-150, esp. 132-133, 136, 140-142.


legitimacy of ministers, who are to be perceives as God’s royal envoys. Moreover, he connects the concept of messengers with the Old Testament role of the prophets (viz. Jer. 1:17: “Arise and speak vnto them”), who were endowed with divine authority to speak before God without any hesitation: “for knowe ye not, that they which haue their full and sufficient authoritie and calling, are not to tarie for a further authorising.”

It is the ignorance of English clergy, with regard to the basic understanding of their calling, which confirms Browne of the veracity of his own course. He recalls clergymen who defend their position by claiming that ministers are only called to pure teaching, not for the government of the church. To refute them, Browne returns to his earlier emphasis on the continuity between Paul’s apostolic office and theirs, “as though Paule might guide the Churche without tarying for the Magistrate and wee may not.” Instead, Paul set himself as an example for the Ephesian elders (cf. Acts 20:31), “that they should followe him, that shoulde watche night and daye in teaching and guiding the flocke as he did.”

### 3.2.3. The Difference between Ecclesial and Civil Means

To Browne, the lingering for the civil authorities meant a neglect of all biblical examples of godly men who refused to give up their calling for the will of kings and political powers. In addition to the ministries’ separate responsibility, ministers also have a different set of means to bring reformation. Hesitant clergy not only surrendered the church to a civil rule, but also to their oppressive means. ‘Means’ that do not fit with church discipline, for the “Lorde kingdome is not by force, neither by an armie or strēgth, as be the kingdomes of this worlde.”

It seems that Browne’s idea of separation between church and state is also related to the different methods by which discipline is maintained. He views violent enforcement, such as imprisonment and beatings, contrary to the Lord’s kingdom, for “the Lords people is of the willing sorte. . . . For it is the conscience and not the power of man that will driue vs to seeke the Lorde kingdom.”

Corresponding with his idea of the sanctity of conscience, church discipline could not be maintained by force or compulsion. The differentiation between church and state that lies beneath this argument, however, does not exclude the possibility of cooperation between civil and ecclesial authorities. Browne finds his biblical example in the prophet Haggai and the

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56 Browne, “A Treatise of reformation,” 161. Browne discern an exception for the use of power. Moses, and the Kings of Juda (Hezekiah) did not use law or power to receive the right church government, but when disobedient after its reception, “they might put them to death.”
returning governor Zerubbabel. An image which, not coincidentally, was also used for Elizabeth by the English exiles returning home. This complementary understanding of church and magistrate, is clearly in line with Calvin’s Genevan practice, and according to Patrick Collinson characteristic for Cambridge Puritans of the 1570’s. Greenham’s household seminary and ministry in Dry Drayton, we discussed in the previous chapter (§ 2.3.6.), is a striking example. As reported earlier (§ 2.2.), a similar view of church and state relations was established by Dutch Reformed Protestants during the Middelburg synod in June 1581. Thus, with his affirmation of this Calvinist alternative, Browne tries to distance himself from any hinge of ‘Anabaptist’ anarchy, while also creating space for nonconformity on the basis of passive disobedience. In this way, the magistracy and the clergy have their separate responsibilities, and are welcome to cooperate for the well-being of church and society, as long as their respective responsibilities do not get mixed. How close Browne’s view of church and state relations is to Calvin’s, becomes most emphatically clear from the following statement::

Yet may they doo nothing concerning the Church, but onelie civillie, and as civile Magistrates, that is, they haue not that authoritie ouer the Church, as to be Prophetes or Priestes, or spiritual Kings, as they are Magistrates ouer the same: but onelie to rule the common wealth in all outherd Justice, to maintaine the right, welfare, and honor thereof, with outward power, bodily punishment, & civil forcing of me. And threfore also because the church is in a commonwealth, it is of their charge: that is concerning the outward prouision & outward iustice, they are to look to it, but to copell religion, to plant church by power, and to force a submission to Ecclesiastical gouernement by lawes & penalties belongeth not


to them, as is proved before, neither yet to the Church. Let us not therefore tarry for the Magistrates.\textsuperscript{61}

This important passage reveals Browne’s nuanced position. His dispute is not aimed at a denial of the divine right of the civil magistracy to rule the commonwealth, but like Calvin (§ 2.3.2.),\textsuperscript{62} at the state’s interference with the church. While carefully averting the mixture of civil and church affairs, he emphasizes their joined responsibility within society—be it of different stature: “should the welfare of the church or the salvatiō of mens soules, hang on their courtesie?”\textsuperscript{63} Acknowledging civil rule in the commonwealth, clears Browne of the hinge of anarchy with which Anabaptism was associated in his day.\textsuperscript{64} Browne rather envisioned a peaceful coexistence between civil society and the church in order to further Christ’s kingdom, in which preachers have a distinctive divine commission: “Therefore is their authorize of God and not of man, and much lesse doeth it depende on man, or on the Magistrate.”\textsuperscript{65} Hence, Browne concludes, there can be no more delay in setting forth the reformation within the English church, even when it would cause a conflict with the civil rulers: “For we knowe that when the Magistrates haue bin most of all against the Church and the authoritie thereof, the Church hath most flourished.”\textsuperscript{66} This superficial reference to Tertullian’s famous dictum (cf. “\textit{semen est sanquis Christianorum}”)\textsuperscript{67} serves to ascertain that ‘tarrying’ does not enchance further reformation but rather its impediment. Ministers should fulfill their vocation regardless of state’s attitude. Browne, therefore, ends his plea for reformation with a repetition of his arguments against the tarrying preachers, whose hesitant attitude has led people to “the power of Antichrist, and keepe from their eyes the kingdom of Christe.”\textsuperscript{68} He then restates the separate responsibilities of the civil authorities and the church:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{61} Browne, “\textit{A Treatise of reformation},” 164. The term ‘commonwealth’ came in vogue during the 1530’s through the political agenda of Thomas Cromwell, who encouraged the younger generation to “produce blueprints for the future in a number of areas”, a programme of social reform, change and innovation, all aiming at “the whole community’s good.” MacCulloch, \textit{The Boy King}, 125.
  \item \textsuperscript{62} Cf. David C. Steinmetz, \textit{Calvin in Context} (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1995), 204-205.
  \item \textsuperscript{63} Browne, “\textit{A Treatise of reformation},” 164.
  \item \textsuperscript{64} “Yea they charge vs as Anabaptistes & denying Magistrates, because we set not vp them, nor the magistrates aboue Christ Jesus and his glorious kingdom.” Browne, “\textit{A Treatise of reformation},” 165.
  \item \textsuperscript{65} Browne, “\textit{A Treatise of reformation},” 166.
  \item \textsuperscript{66} Browne, “\textit{A Treatise of reformation},” 167.
  \item \textsuperscript{67} Cf. Tertullian, “\textit{Apologeticus},” 50, \textit{PL} 1:603. Similar to Tertullian, Browne likens to constrast the power of human powers with the power of Christ’s Kingdom, to explain the opposition of the state as a sign of a Christian’s faithfulness. For Tertullian, see Eric Osborn, \textit{Tertullian: First Theologian of the West} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 74-77.
\end{itemize}
Goe to therefore, and the outward power and ciuil forcings, let us leave to the Magistrates: to rule the common wealth in all outward justice, belongeth to them: but let the Church rule in spirituall wise, and not in worldlie maner: by a liuelie lawe preached, and not by a ciuill lawe written: by holinesse in inwarde and outwarde obedience, and not in straightnesse of the outwarde onelie.69

The state does not possess the divine means to govern the church, since civil methods of discipline are not suitable to lead the church into holiness, something which is most evidently visible with regard to the Lord’s Supper. The Puritan preachers may complain that they cannot prevent it from being abused by unfit people, it is their own negligence of discipline that causes “open wickednesse” to flourish. This is an important nuance, since Browne obviously does not imagine a perfect church, but a church which by way of discipline is capable of correcting errors: “no open wickednesse shal shew it selfe in the Church, that it shoulde be incurable.”70 The application of discipline does not prevent sin to flare up, but does keep it from persisting. If properly disciplined, the church can be the “house of the liuing God,” existing out of a people, “bought for so great a price to glorifie God as his free men.”71 Yet without discipline, the church is unable to correct itself and “where anie open disorder is incurable, there is not the Lords Zion, to the which he is turned to dwell therein.”72 In other words, the rule of Christ is directly visible in, and thus dependent on, a sufficient exercise of discipline. Diagnosing the neglect within the Church of England, Browne can draw only one conclusion: “they are not the Lordes Church.”73 For the power of Christ is manifest in the separation of the ungodly. So Browne ends his pamphlet with a last appeal: “Howe then dare these menne teache vs, that anie euill thing is tolerable in the Church, as though the church gouernment could not remedie it.”74

70 Browne, “A Treatise of reformation,” 168. Calvin makes the same accusation of supposed perfection toward the Anabaptist movement (see Inst. IV, I, 20-28), using the same metaphor of sickness (peculator morbis) and cure (remedia) to describe the function of discipline as Browne does. The difference is that with Calvin God’s covenant with his people is not (entirely) corrupted by disobedience, whereas for Browne obedience is a requirement for the upholding of the covenant. For Browne’s ‘mutualist’ or ‘conditional’ interpretation of covenant ecclesiology, see Brachlow, The Communion of the Saints, 46-55.
74 Browne, “A Treatise of reformation,” 170. The wording “tolerable” frequently appears in the disputations between the various parties during the English Reformation. For example the protestant Bishop Richard Cox, who in defense of the Prayer book admonished the Puritans that the vestments were at least “tollerable” (cf. Primus, Richard Greenham, 58). So it became a somewhat spoiled word. See also Albert Peel, ed. The Second Parte of a Register (2 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915), 1: 227-229. The word appears most prominently in the 1571 declaration that had to be signed by all ministers in Greenham’s diocese, in which the Book of Common Prayer was “not wicked but tolerable and to be used obediently for order and comeliness only”. Quoted in Kenneth L. Parker, Eric J. Carlson, Practical Divinity: The Works and Life of Revd Richard Greenham (St Andrews Studies in Reformation History; Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 15.
3.2.4. Conclusion

Our reading of Browne’s infamous pamphlet clearly shows that we should not interpret his cry (‘not to tarry for the magistrate’) as a call for outright anarchy, or as a plea for the substitution of the English monarchy by a republican structure. The basic pattern of his argumentation is to a large degree in accord with the Puritan ideal of a godly state, ruled by a Christian prince.\(^{75}\) His protest rather opposes an ‘unbiblical’ blending of ecclesiastical affairs with the English civil government. As already observed in Chapter 2, criticism of civil interference with ecclesiastical affairs was a common feature among Cambridge Presbyterians. We should consider Browne’s cry not as ‘a voice in the wilderness’, but as fully in tune with the spirit of his time. It should also prevent us from overestimating the ideological differences between Browne and his former circle of Presbyterians. It is true that Browne goes further in the practical consequences than most of his contemporaries, yet he never went outside the existent doctrine of obedience. We should, therefore, take his faithfulness to non-resistance not too lightly on this point.\(^{76}\) Furthermore, it is important to stress that his argument for separation between civil and ecclesial responsibilities is not first political—being a public manifest defending the right of the people—but firmly theological: it is an appeal to Puritan ministers to fulfill their divine duty irrespective of the opposition by civil magistrates.

Browne’s advocacy of the independence of the church, stemmed from his belief in the church as the direct realm of Christ’s visible rule. A rule that unlike Elizabeth’s worldly rule was not maintained by force and compulsion. But, since faith is matter of conscience, by means of voluntary obedience of faithful believers.\(^{77}\) Within the church as Christ’s dominion, ordained ministers appear subsequently in terms of ‘messengers’, divinely called and received with consent of the church, to guide the church in reformation. Ordained ministry, according to Browne, is therefore an ecclesial office with spiritual responsibility, and should be kept far away from civil power. It is predominantly the mingling of ecclesiastical and civil offices, especially embodied by the bishops, that caused Browne to separate from the English church and critique his fellow Puritans who by their persistence, tolerated the unreformed state of the English church. For by ‘tarrying’ these ministers, in essence, surrendered ecclesial authority (‘the power of the keys’) to civil powers, with the result that civil means that did not fit with Christ’s rule were used to...

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\(^{77}\) Browne’s ideas about the relationship between the freedom of conscience, freedom of religion and separation between church and state, correspond to a large degree with Aggaeus of Albada (Acten van den Vredehandel gheschiet te Colen, Antwerp 1581), see Van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt*, 227-228.
enforce spiritual obedience. When ministers called to guide the church in obedience to Christ refuse to take up this responsibility they are exempted from their office.

3.3. A Treatise vpon the 23. of Matthew (1582)

In the same period that Browne's call for further reformation was printed, he also wrote an extensive critique of clerical education as it was in existence, titled *A Treatise vpon the 23. Of Matthewe*. It remained unfinished, probably due to difficulties with the underground printing press in Middelburg, or a shortage of financial funds. Frederick Powicke suggests personal issues between Browne and its printer, Richard Schilder, prevented it from being completed. While the subject of this second document on a superficial level allows for a broader audience than *A reformation without tarying*—since the neglect of right Scripture handling by parish clergy was a common Puritan critique—the flow of his argumentation does suggest that his criticism concerns the same group. In strong language, according to Champlin Burrage the most "scathing" of all his writings, Browne argues against the extravagant usage of logic and rhetoric in sermonizing, which he claims only leads to a displacement of the Biblical message and hinders the upbuilding of the church. Instead, he advocates a more Biblical oriented method of preaching on the basis of the text of Matthew 23:1-3. Besides the obvious methodological aspect, Browne also takes the opportunity to make "an irresistible case for separation," by re-directing Jesus' woes of Matthew 23 toward the English bishops and the corruption of the English church.

It is remarkable, considering the overall limited interest in Browne's literature, that two articles have appeared which discuss the present treatise on Matthew 23. In 1983 Harry Foreman wrote an article from the viewpoint of clerical education, and in 1987 Diane Parkin-Speer did the same from the angle of sixteenth century rhetoric. Both scholars conclude that Browne's firm objections were motivated by his conviction that the Biblical Scriptures should form the sole basis for preaching, yet questions still can remain about the implications concerning his evaluation of ministerial education as such. For example, Parkin-Speer notices Browne's extensive and eloquent use of logic and

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78 White, *The English Separatist Tradition*, 204.
rhetoric, but still concludes that Browne was an “intellectual and theological iconoclast” whose “anti-clericalism” opposed every form of clerical education. Though Browne’s concept of education is not the primary focus of this study, his contesting views of ministerial education and preaching do need to be clarified in view of his concept of ordained ministry in order to establish his position within the Elizabethan landscape.

3.3.1. On Preaching and Ministerial Education

In the first section, Browne offers an explanation of a characteristic Puritan framework for preaching: reading scripture, exegesis, doctrine and application. This is a proposal which resembles closely, what J.W. Blench termed, “the new Reformed arrangement,” following the scheme of exegesis (literal sense), doctrines and application. A form of preaching which, as we saw in the previous chapter (§ 2.3.7.), was favorite among Cambridge Puritans. However, Blench also mentions that “the vast majority of Elizabethan preachers” adopted a modified version of the ‘modern style’ which approximated the more elaborated classical format. It is likely that Browne’s regret and criticism is aimed at those parish ministers who sacrificed the application for the benefit of their own vanity, or succumbed to the people’s desire for a ‘learned’ ministry as embellishment of the village’s reputation. Arnold Hunt notes how this last phenomenon occurred specifically in response to Puritan ministers whose preaching was found too simple. In this way, argues Browne, these ministers sacrificed practical divinity for the exhibition of their proficiency in Greek and Latin, or their knowledge of the church

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86 Cf. “The denunciation of all things rhetorical is thoroughgoing and logically consistent, considering the radical Protestant position. However, being a Cambridge man, well-trained in the rhetorical arts of the time, he writes eloquently and powerfully in a plain polemical way. . . . The irony of denouncing rhetoric with powerful rhetorical techniques apparently did not occur to Robert Browne, who showed thorough knowledge and training in the persuasive writing techniques of the English Renaissance.” Parkin-Speer, “Robert Browne,” 522.


88 Cf. “Puritans sermons therefore followed a specific format that moved in Ramistic fashion from the general to the specific. The sermon would begin with a particular text of Scripture, move to the more particular by placing it in the context of its chapter and book of the Bible, then ‘open’ the different words of the text and classify the different doctrines each word or phrase illustrated (with examples from other texts or from common experience), and end with the ‘uses’ of the text, or how it might be applied to the hearer’s life.” Stephanie Sleeper, “Ramist Logic,” in Puritans and Puritanism in Europe and America, 2:518. This format was later fully employed and explained by William Perkins in his celebrated classic The Arte of Prophesying (Eng. 1607).


91 See Arnold Hunt, The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and Their Audiences, 1590-1640 (Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History; Cambridge University Press, 2010), 287-288. Hunt reports that those preachers who adopted the Puritan plain style were sometimes scorned by their own parishioners who sought a more learned minister, someone using elaborate Latin quotations, out of local pride.
fathers.⁹² Though Browne affirms the need for careful study of the Scriptures, it may never displace the concrete application of Scripture by which the people are actually nourished: “But chieflie the applying must not be forgotten.”⁹³ To Browne, much like what we observed earlier in Greenham’s notebook (§ 2.3.6.), practical application was the primary intention of preaching.⁹⁴ Of course, this was also the whole point of Ramist method as discussed in the previous chapter (§ 2.3.7.). It seems more reasonable, therefore, to understand Browne’s ironic remarks about ministerial education not as a general dismissal but as a critical evaluation of homiletic practices in light of the purpose of preaching: “Beware ye Preachers, that ye haue your Logik: that will be good foode for the sheepe. . . . By that also the people whiche haue not learned Logike, are shutt out and discouraged from talking, pleading, and mutuall edifying.”⁹⁵

Foreman and Parkin-Speer, in their reading of this document, suggest moreover that Browne’s critique was strengthened by his idea of the covenanted church which he deemed to be in contrast with the elitist sphere in which these preachers exhibited their knowledge.⁹⁶ There is some truth in their analysis. Yet it must not be forgotten that Brown was himself a trained Cambridge scholar and steeped in Puritan theology. In an elaborate satire on Aristotelian logic, Browne ridicules the self-esteem of university trained clergy, who take pride in their knowledge of Latin logical categories: “You take away their wisedome, if you speake so playne English.”⁹⁷ Instead of fruitful preaching, the perverse focus of these preachers on logic only leads to endless disputations by syllogisms, while congratulating themselves with their university degrees. Then, Browne turns to those who have embraced Ramist logic. Unlike his criticism of Aristotelian logic, Browne does not seem to reject the Ramist method per se, but its improper handling in which the practical application is forgotten: “their Logike hath helde them so long in learning what they shuld do, that they haue done li tle or nothing at all.”⁹⁸ Though they may have studied Scripture, and took notice of its doctrine, they did not arrive at the original goal of preaching, the application. It was precisely the application that, in Browne’s view, ‘makes’ the sermon. So, his problem is not with university training per se, but when it is employed in such as way that it prohibits people from getting Scriptural wisdom: “For ye say ye may not looke on holye Scriptures, nor search out wisdom & knowledge, tyll you haue throughlye learned Aristotle, or spent your seauen yeares at Cambrige, in studying of the sciences. Then shal you handle the Scriptures with your

⁹² See Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Matthewe,” 172-173.
⁹³ Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Matthewe,” 172.
⁹⁴ Cf. “This final aspect—the ‘use’ or application of the text—was the central goal of the sermon: it gave people the means to understand how the abstract doctrines fitted into their own lives, and it moved them to repentance.” Sleeper, “Ramist Logic,” 518.
⁹⁷ Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Matthewe,” 177.
⁹⁸ Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Matthewe,” 179.
cleane washed handes." In order to provide people with the nourishment of Scripture, a more modest approach was required, known as 'plain style', an approach stripped of all embellishment of references to classical authors. As seen in our discussion of the reception of Ramism, the 'plain style' was a common feature among Cambridge Puritans, most of whom were thorough Ramists. They shared Browne’s critique upon the excessive use of logic that concealed the plain language of Scripture, and their adoption of Ramist methodology was precisely aimed at the integration of theology and praxis. Furthermore, Browne himself nowhere explicitly expresses his criticism toward Ramus as he does to Aristotle, and used Ramist methodology extensively in his catechetical A Booke which sheweth the life and manners (§ 3.4.). It seems therefore more likely that his criticism did not concern academic education in general but rather an inappropriate glorification of logic and rhetoric at the expense of practical divinity.

This becomes even more clear in his subsequent evaluation of academic rhetoric. Browne paradoxically exhibits his own rhetoric abilities through a satirical exposition on a personified rhetoric, reminiscent of Erasmus’ Moriae Encomium (1508): “Speak for thy selfe, O Rhetorike, we wil heare thy sweete voice. Thou wilt tell vs thy Tropes and thy Figures.” He then explains one by one the various tropes and figures, congruent with the rhetorical system of Ramism. Despite his obvious ironical intention, one cannot escape the idea that Browne also tries to prove his own rhetorical capability, as he did with the logical categories. The point of Browne’s ridicule becomes clear when he writes, “[b]ut we may not vse preatie speache, as if therefore the matter should be pretie.” In other words, the value or truthfulness of a sermon cannot be determined by the amount of tropes or metaphors. It’s the idolizing of rhetoric and logic that makes Browne

103 Contra Parkin-Speer who writes that Browne lumbs classical logic and rhetoric together with Ramism, see Parkin-Speer, "Robert Browne," 519-522.
106 Browne, "A Treatise vpon the 23. of Mattheuwe," 182.
suspicious of the whole enterprise. He ends the first section with a pithy summary that brings together all previous elements in order to scorn all preachers who trust the strength of their logic and rhetoric more than they do the words of Scripture itself, thereby falling short of fulfilling their divine calling, namely to edify the church:

I thought good to write these things, that in handling of the scriptures, we might take heed of such vanitye, know that our wisdom to salvation, is by the holy scriptures, & not by vaine Logike, as Paul doth teach vs. They are able, sayth he, to make vs wise enough, and are profitable ether for teaching, or improuing, or correcting, or instructing.109

The right handling of Scripture for preaching is distinguished by its reliance on the text of the Bible itself and not on skills acquired by university training. Hence, Browne’s arguments against logic and rhetoric are not a downright rejection of academic education, but should be understood as a sharp critique of clergymen who valued their reputation and prestige more than that they sought to provide the churches with a preaching ministry that fostered practical wisdom.

3.3.2. Episcopal Orders and the Covenantal Church

The second part, more beneficiary to our purposes, is entirely dedicated to an expose of the first three verses of Matthew chapter 23, ‘Jesus’ address to the Pharisees’, based on the translation of the Geneva Bible (1560).110 It is both meant as an illustration of a proficient handling of Scripture, as well as an attempt to further his argument for separation. His basic argument is that true preaching should flow from the right doctrine, instead of logic and rhetoric, in order to be a “meanes of our happines,”111 or channel of repentance and salvation, a fairly common opinion among most Cambridge Puritans—and for that matter—Protestants in general.112 Browne explains his position through an


110 Cf. "Nowe to handle these things more largely by the scriptures, we haue no neede of Logike. . . . See how this Logike doth pull a sacke vpon the truth, to make it seeme fairer." Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Matthewe,” 203.


abridged version\textsuperscript{113} of his doctrinal framework, existing of two points:\textsuperscript{114} the means of our happiness, and the calling and leading to happiness. God in his mercy and love restores humanity’s happiness by means of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and through the local church calls and leads people to this happiness: “God doeth Plante and gather his Church under one kinde of gouernement, he maketh a couenaūt with it, and doeth promisse to be God and Sauior unto it.”\textsuperscript{115} In short, the church is the place where salvation ‘happens’ through the covenantal relationship with God. By the presence of Christ, the church shares in the spiritual gifts together with the special offices as a derivative of Christ’s threefold office: “Also we are called and led vnto happines by all those graces and offices, which are from Christ, and Vnder Christ.”\textsuperscript{116}

Departing from Matthew 23:1 (“Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to his disciples”), he immediately starts to question the practice of public preaching at commonplaces by English clergy, such as happened for the queen, the church hierarchy, and at the famous open air pulpit at ‘Paul’s Cross’ in London,\textsuperscript{117} where many leading clergymen in his day preached to large crowds, particularly including the city’s major and aldermen. It is unclear however, how he connects his argument to the text. But it seems that this type of ‘civic preaching’ was illustrative of the absence of sufficient ‘reformation’ in the aforementioned places, which confirmed Browne of its ‘unworthiness’.\textsuperscript{118} For it is a kind of preaching that is not met by obedience to God’s call and the formation of a covenant community. Henceforth, Browne disqualifies all clergy who are not gathered out of the false church with its false government, who are not received into the covenant of Christ, and are therefore not partakers of Christ’s promises. In this threefold argument,

\begin{footnotes}
\item[113] On this point, Browne announces that a further explanation of this doctrinal framework (the means and calling to happiness) will be given in another book, which we know as A Booke which sheweth the life and manners (see further § 3.4.).
\item[114] See Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Matthewe,” 197-199.
\item[115] “Firste, God doeth Plante and gather his Church under one kinde of gouernement, he maketh a couenaūt with it, and doeth promisse to be God and Sauior unto it, he giveth his promisses to the seede of the church, he giveth it his spirit, he receaueth it to suffer and dye unto sinne by repentaunce, he giueth Baptisme as seale of this suffering and repentaunce, he receaueth it to one communiaun of graces in the church, as first to attonemēt by the Priesthoode of Christ.” Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Mattheuze,” 198.
\item[116] Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Mattheuze,” 198.
\item[117] St Paul’s Cross, or “Paules Crosse” was an open-air pulpit next to the St Paul’s Cathedral, build by Thomas Kempe in the late fifteenth century, and later destroyed during the First English Civil War in 1643. It was the most important London forum for major public religious statements and from this outdoor pulpit lots of sermons have been preached during the English Reformation. See Hill, Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England, 35-36; Seaver, The Puritan Lectureships, 58-59; MacCulloch, The Later Reformation in England, 48; and Hunt, The Art of Hearing, 17, 212-213, esp. 320-342. For its history and influence, see Mary Morrissey, Politics and the Paul’s Cross Sermons 1558-1642 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), esp. xi-xiv; and Torrance Kirby, and P.G. Stanwood, eds. Paul’s Cross and the Culture of Persuasion in England, 1520-1640 (SHCT, vol. 171; Leiden: Brill, 2014), 203ff.
\item[118] Cf. “Yea none may continue to preach the truth vnto those, when once they haue boldly testified it, and they put it from them, and make theeselves vnworthie thereof, but they must turn away from such: and if a companie in anye citie be such, then muste they forsake that companie.” Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Mattheuze,” 200; cf. Hunt, The Art of Hearing, 325.
\end{footnotes}
Browne shows how his entire ecclesiology depends on this ‘Christological invitation,’ which is Christ’s covenant. Christ plants his church out of those separated people, and provides them with his promises, which he sums up: “As of the gifte of the Spirite, of Suffering and dying vnto sinne by repentance, of the due vse of Baptisme, of the Kingdome, Priesthoode, and Prophecie of Christ, &c.”

God’s local covenanted congregation is henceforth Browne’s theological framework for his view of ordained ministry. For it is the local covenant that grounds the legitimacy of a minister’s vocation. The lack of sufficient congregational legitimacy is Browne’s major argument against the episcopal ministry. Though they are exclusively authorized in the Church of England to ordain and license the lower clergy, they themselves lack this covenantal basis in a locally gathered community, and thus have no part in Christ’s promises. He then draws a sarcastic picture to illustrate the corrupt and suppressing relation between the licensed preacher and the bishop:

My Lorde Bishoppere there controlleth, in his name the Preacher standeth vp, as the wolfe doeth in a visarde, he hath the Bishoppes name in parchement, for that is his licence, it is a Theeues quittance though he came in by the windowe, it is the Scourecoastes Passeport, though he roaue out for his praye. My Lordes face is in the waxe, a print and marke of holines. Who can preache without it? It is the seale of ghostlie message. Three such seales, haue threefolde grace, but the money which buyeth them, hath that grace seuenhundreth foule.

The licensed preacher’s fate is tied to the illegitimate approval of the bishop (‘as wolf wearing a mask’), which could be bought for a right amount of money. Because of this corruption, most Puritans regarded the episcopal ordination as a mere civil procedure. Paul Seaver writes, “[e]piscopal ordination was not a sufficient warranty,” true ministry required a divine call to preach. Playing the Lordship of Christ and the lordship of the bishop against each other, Browne, henceforth, ridicules the episcopal structure of the church of England as a remnant of Rome. For without the right government, the Church of England is not the church of Christ, and therefore can there be no ‘calling and leading to happiness’. The absence of Christ’s covenant disqualifies the church and, along with it, its preaching. The Church of England is ‘enslaved’ to the authority of the bishops.

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119 Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Matthewe,” 203.
120 Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Matthewe,” 204. Preaching licences were distributed independently from a degree in theology, and were granted only by universities and episcopal authority: “In the Elizabethan Church no man could preach without a license.” Craig R. Thompson, Universities in Tudor England (Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1959), 17.
122 Seaver, The Puritan Lectureships, 46.
123 Cf. “The abuse of authority by the prelacy was scommonly referred to as ‘the lordship of bishops.’” Primus, The Vestments Controversy, 137.
instead of Christ’s, writes Browne. Not afraid of avoiding absolute language, he denies the divine vocation of the English ministry: “I haue not sent you saieth the Lord”.\(^\text{124}\) Without the covenant as expression of the kingdom of Christ, there is no sufficient basis for the preaching ministry. This is how his use of the term ‘messenger’ should be explained. It denotes the Christological dimension of the ministerial vocation. To Browne, Christ’s authority is incompatible with the existence of episcopal authority, and therefore the mere presence of Word and Sacrament is not enough to make a church truthful.\(^\text{125}\) For a church cannot serve two masters, it needs to be fully reformed, or it is not the church.

Browne continues with verse 2 and 3 of Matthew 23 (“The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses seat, so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice.”). Browne’s account suggests that tarrying Puritans explained the phrase ‘taking Moses’ seat’ as a reference to a rightful pulpit or right doctrine, with which they justified their tolerance of non-preaching ministry.\(^\text{126}\) From this erroneous interpretation of ‘seat’, argues Browne, they wrongly infer that unfit ministers can still administer truthful sacraments: “that if anie Minister haue the seate, though they be vtterlie vnmeete for that calling, either for want of giftes in knowledge and teaching, or for lyfe and behauiour, yet we may lawfullie receyue the Sacramentes of them.”\(^\text{127}\) The failure of an adequate examination of a candidates’ calling and gifts, strengthens Browne in his opinion that the Roman doctrine of character indelebilis is still very much alive within the English church. For Browne, ministerial qualification does not stem from a formal position or preaching license, but is rather confirmed by sufficient learning and godly life. Crucial for an appropriate candidate is sufficient Scriptural knowledge: if not, “[i]s is not to call a foole to be our maister, and to welcome a messenger as bringing good tydinges, from the Deuill and Satan?”\(^\text{128}\) He illustrates his case by multiple metaphors to prove that the mere “orders of Priesthoode” do not make a person fit for ministry.\(^\text{129}\) A minister cannot be ‘made’ by episcopal orders, just as ignorance cannot be overcome by a bishop’s license, but only by adequate training. Curious is Browne’s attempt to correct an erroneous interpretation of Calvin’s Institutes,\(^\text{130}\) based

\(^{124}\) Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Matthewe,” 204.

\(^{125}\) Cf. Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Matthewe,” 207.

\(^{126}\) See Hill, Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England, 80.

\(^{127}\) Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Matthewe,” 210-211.

\(^{128}\) Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Matthewe,” 211.

\(^{129}\) Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Matthewe,” 211.

\(^{130}\) “For though they haue such waight of Scripture to beate downe this follie, yet one poore delusion alledged falslie out of Caluin, must shift it of all. For it maketh no matter say they, who bring vs a letter or a gift, so that the gift and the letter be good.” Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Matthewe,” 211-212. Probably Browne refers to a passage in Calvin’s Institutes (IV, 10, 26), where Calvin discusses the same passage in Matthew 23:3. Calvin explains the text by saying that Jesus admonished his hearers to practice the message (doctrine) of the Pharisees, while refraining from following their example: “All he meant, therefore, was to guard the common people against being led by the bad example of their teachers to despise doctrine” (Inst. IV, 10, 26).
on which some Puritans seemingly defended the tolerance of unfit ministers. On this point Browne returns to the subject of pastoral ministry, that he conceives in the terms of ‘agency’, representing God as his messenger:

Haue I sente them saieth the Lorde, or commaunded them, when they cause my people to erre, by their lyes and by their flatteries, saying, ye are his people and church, though ye be polluted and abominable? Haue these dumme Dogges or tolerating preachers, my letters and seales? I neuer gaue them sayeth the Lorde, they are stolen and counterfet. Yea they haue the seales and licenses of their wicked Bishoppes, and if they haue my message, why holde they their peace at the wicked Bishoppes discharging, as if they had his message onelie.131

By making their ministry depended of the bishop’s approval, they ignore and replace the Lordship of Christ, who is the only authoritative source and essence of the church. The absence of God’s calling affects not only the status of the minister, but also his message as is evidenced by the lack of adequate reformation: “For his message can not be without his gouernment, & his gouernment is the Lordship he hath in the cōmunion of his offices. . . . You haue not yet planted my Church sayth the Lord, by gathering it from the wicked and vnworthie, and yet this is the first dutie of all my messengers.”132 The ordained minister seems to embody an important ‘means’ in the gathering of church, as an ‘covenantal agent’ as it were, whose preached message gathers the worthy from the unworthy, “that it may be visible.”133

Though, as we have observed thus far, the ordained ministry plays an important role in Browne’s covenantal ecclesiology, he gives full priority to the congregation. Against those Puritans who are in agreement with his rejection of episcopal authority, but still looked for the parliament’s approval, he makes his argument for the need of separation. By the ‘wait and see attitude’ of these ministers, the theme of the previous pamphlet A reformation without tarying, they have essentially replaced their obedience to Christ with obedience to the civil authority. Therefore Browne concludes: “we saye that their preaching is not the worde of message frō God, neither may wee partake with thē in the Sacramentes.”134 Browne’s primal criticism is directed to the blatancy with which these preachers assume that the English Church maintains to be the Church of God, irrespectively of its abuses and unbiblical government. The mere sacraments cannot guarantee the presence of God’s covenant, since a truthful administration of the sacraments first requires a true ‘outward church’.135

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131 Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Matthewe,” 212. See for the expression ‘dumb dogs’ § 3.6.
132 Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Matthewe,” 212.
133 Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Matthewe,” 212.
135 Cf. “Nowe therefore it they be not that outwarde church as we haue proued they are not, what shall wee account of their Sacramentes? Can they be Sacramentes without the spirituall communion? But they are without this.
covenant appears as Browne’s basic framework for ecclesiology. It is the community of faith that constitutes the sacraments, not vice versa. Hence, the disorderly and abusive administration of the sacraments is not only the responsibility of the minister, but of the entire congregation: “doth not the Church partake with the Minister, and is not every Christian a King and a Priest, to rule with Christ by open rebuke . . .?” In other words, the right administration of the sacraments is embedded within the joined responsibility of the whole congregation, and the judgment thereof is subject to scrutiny of the entire membership. It appears that while Browne regards the ordained minister as an agent of the covenant, he is not the object of God’s covenant:

For though the minister be guide in receaing them, yet it is the church which doth partake vnto them that fellowship. For wee Preach not our selues, sayeth Paul, but Iesus Christ, and our selues your servantes. And againe he saith: We are yours, and ye are Christes. Soe then the church is cheefe, though Paul be greater in the church vnder Christ, then anie one single person in the church. And therefore is the Church called the Pillar and grounde of Trueth: And though the Minister should fail, yet the Church must stande sure.

It is the covenant that qualifies the church, not the presence of ordained ministry. Though ministers may normally perform the baptismal rite, according to Browne it is the community that actually receives the baptized into its fellowship. Browne’s covenantal approach clearly contains a fundamental critique upon the English episcopal structure, that turns the foundations of the church upside down. Not the ministry, but the congregation ‘is in Moses seat’. It is the entire congregation which has the right and obligation to separate itself from ministers who are unfit to perform their ministry. Browne is well aware that this ecclesiological position reminds his adversaries of Donatism and Anabaptism: “Yet againe for this matter they bring in Caluin against vs, and accuse vs for Anabaptistes and Donatistes.” ‘Donatism’ would become by far the

communion, whiche can have no gatheringe, planting, separation or reforming of their church, but by their spirituall Courtes, Popishe officers, and their excommunication, absoluation, lawes and penalties, which are altogether Antichristiā.” Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Matthewe,” 214.


Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Matthewe,” 215. A similar commend about a wrong interpretation of Calvin was made by Henry Barrow (cf. Avis, The Church in the Theology of the Reformers, 61). ‘Donatism’ was a frequently made accusation against the Puritans, and continued to play an important role in harassments of Separatists, such as the work of the Puritan writer George Gifford (A Short Treatise Against the Donatists of England, 1590; cf. McGinnis, George Gifford and the Reformation of the Common Sort, 95-101; and Culpepper, Francis Johnson and the English Separatist Influence, 47-48). Perry Miller writes, “‘Donatism’ was a serious charge, for it was an insinuation that the endeavor to identify the visible church and invisible church was one with the crackbrained schemes of enthusiasts and sectaries, of Anabaptists, Millenarians, and Levellers, who believed that they too were setting up congregations of the holy” (The New England Mind, 1:442). The accusation is derived from the historical Donatist movement (named after Donatus Magnus), which has its roots in the third-century persecutions under emperor Diocletian. Afterwards they formed a separate group
most frequently used “incriminating label” against the Separatists, writes Timothy George.  

Browne, however, not only disagrees with these labels, he also refutes the premise of their argument on the basis of an unspecified part of 1 Corinthians 5., a chapter in which Paul deals with the ‘doing away’ of sins and exclusion of sinners from the church. Browne apparently explains this text differently than Calvin did. Most likely, Browne has a more narrow reading of the term ‘company’ (Gk. συναναμίγνυσθαι) in 1 Corinthians 5:9 and 11, which he limits to the “spiritual communion, which is onlie in the Church”. Calvin, in his Institutes, evidently advocated a broader definition, including ‘every companionship’ outside ecclesial obligations. Yet, for Browne, church discipline is only applicable to the covenanted communion, and had no bearing upon “the other communion, which is in a common wealth.” So what is true for the church, does not apply to the rest of society, which is the obligation of faithful believers to seek God’s place and leave places of bondage: “That it must holde the true flocke, and seeke the right shepheardes and depart from the others.”

3.3.3. Inward and Outward Vocation

Thus far, Browne argued that ministry outside the covenanted community is illegitimate, that true ministry leads people into a covenanted community, and that every Christian has the responsibility to leave parishes where this covenant is absent. In the last part, Browne turns to an explicit discussion of the ministerial calling itself, which is succinctly a mockery of the assumed inward and outward calling of licensed preachers. The differentiation between an inward and outward calling is a typical Protestant feature that was commonly used in Puritan theology. Under the inward calling Browne primarily understands the indwelling of the Spirit, dedication, and competence: “For they allege that they haue the spirite of God, a good conscience, and a good minde to doo good to the

within the North African church, since they refused to tolerate lapsarians (traditores) back into their fellowship and disqualified the administration of sacraments by lapsed ministers. Donatus not only challenged the legitimacy of the incumbent bishop Caecilius, since he was ordained by a so called traditor, but ensured that an alternative bishop got elected. Accused of perfectionism, the Donatists saw themselves as defenders of the purity of the church and the testimony of the martyrs. The height of the Donatist Movement was in the fourth and fifth century. See for a good overview of the Donatist Movement, W. H. C. Frend, The Donatist Church: A Movement of Protest in Roman North Africa (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); and Henry Chadwick, The Church in Ancient Society: From Galilee to Gregory the Great (Oxford History of the Christian Church; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 382-393. In this study ‘Donatism’ will refer primarily to this idea of moral perfectionism as guarantee of the legitimacy of ordained ministry and the sacraments.


141 Cf. “Ac tantum hic periculum prospeciebat, ut vel ab omni sodalitate interdiceret.” Calvin, Inst. IV, 12, 5.


143 Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Matthewe,” 216.

144 See for example Luther (see Gustav Wingren, Luther on Vocation, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen [Eugene: Wipf and Stock, (1957), 2004], 51-52) and Bucer who both made a similar distinction between the divine vocation and congregational reception (see Willem van ’t Spijker, De ambten bij Martin Bucer [Kampen: Uitgeverij Kok, 1987], 366-370).
Churche, and they haue also knowledge sufficient.” However, in Browne’s eyes, the absence of Biblical governance, the present power of civil authorities over ecclesial affairs, and the negligence of discipline, give clear evidence of the lack of such an inward calling among English clergy: “If they walcke thus after the fleshe, howe can they saye, that they haue the spirite or be inwardlie called?” These ministers who claim to have a calling show by their unwillingness to bring reformation, a blindness incompatible with the presence of the Spirit. He then skeptically recalls the sorrow of some Puritans over the church’s abuses, while they at the same time continue to tolerate the episcopal hierarchy, who are moreover celebrated as successors of the ‘Marian martyrs’. The appropriation of the Marian martyrs, whose legacy found its way to the heart of the English church by John Foxe’s Book of Martyrs, was an important part of the debate between conformists and nonconformists, battling for the soul of the English church. Browne joins this debate by sharply contrasting the luxurious lifestyle of the bishops with the circumstances in which these martyrs found their death: “Neyther Cranmer nor Latimer, nor Hooper, nor Ridley, were so meete for the prison houses, as these are for their Bishoprikes. They loue the fleece and thinke on the fatte, and this is their inwarde calling.” While Browne's portrayal of the wealth of the bishopry is somewhat overstated, their affluent situation is incomparable to the tragic martyrdom of Cranmer, Latimer, Hooper and Ridley. The only similarity Browne allows for is with the Marian bishop Edmund Bonner (c. 1500-1569), also known as ‘Bloody Bonner,’ who was notorious for his reign of terror over London and his persecution of Protestants. It is

146 Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Mattheuwe,” 217.
147 Cf. Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Mattheuwe,” 218. Browne refers to their refusal “to weare a surplesse, or be precise in some other pointes”. See Duffy, The Stripping of the Altars, 474. With the introduction of the Book of Common Prayer of 1552 the clergy were required “wearing neither cope nor vestment, as required in 1549, but the simple surplice, like the parish clerk or the choir.”
148 After the break with Rome and thereby with papal tradition, protestant theologians explored the past in order to find new ‘religious heroes’, such as, for example the Lollards and William Tyndale, who were celebrated for their reforms in the Edwardian period. After the Marian years, those protestants who died under her rule, known as ‘Marian martyrs’, were incorporated is the history of protestant saints. John Foxe’s famous Acts and Monuments (1563, 1570) became the most significant and vivid example of a Protestant hagiography (cf. MacCulloch, The Boy King, 136-138; also Arnold Hunt, “Clerical and Parish Libraries,” in The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland, vol. 1: To 1640, eds. Elisabeth Leedham-Green, and Teresa Webber [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006], 414).
150 Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Mattheuwe,” 218. Thomas Cranmer, Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley, and John Hooper were counted among the leading theologians of their days. They were all martyred during Mary’s reign after a show trial in 1556. See Hazlett, The Reformation in Britain and Ireland, 53; For an extensive treatment of the life of Thomas Cranmer, see Diarmaid MacCulloch, Thomas Cranmer: A Life (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).
151 See O’Day, The English Clergy, 33-36. She gives a vivid example of Bishop Thomas Bentham who found his see in a perilous economic situation.
an explicit attempt to turn the cards on these bishops, and claiming the Marian Martyrs
as his own predecessors, implying that persecution is a mark of the true Protestant. These
‘tolerating Puritans’ unjustly call themselves true Protestants for they lack the action that
supports this claim. Browne writes,

Beholde, haue they not nowe an inwarde calling? They professe & vowe in their
harter to helpe Christes little flocke. But doo they paye their vowes in their
palaces and parishes, as Philpot did his vowes in Smithfielde? Their state in the
church is their statelines, and their calling is their cutting with the sword, for
ther pryde is a right inward calling, & their crueltie is the good mouing of their
spirete and conscience.153

The present hesitancy and leniency of these Puritan ministers toward the civil authority
stands in sharp contrast with the testimony of the famous Protestant martyr John Philpot.
They would do well, therefore, urges Browne, to reconsider the Marian regime as a divine
warning given the popish elements that were kept intact under Edward VI: “God was
mercifull by the rodde of Queene Marie.”154

When considering the outward calling of these ministers, Browne does not alter
his tone one note, but he continues his fierce criticism of bishops’ comfortable lifestyle,
ambition, the elevation of their Cambridge degrees, and corruption by bribes and
patrons. Episcopal ordination required a particular amount of money, and in this way the
higher clergy enriched themselves over the back of the lower clergy, by demanding sums

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Persecutions,” 159, 162. Death by burning became after the re-enactment of three medieval statutes by Mary, the penalty
for those were convicted of heresy by the church courts and refused to recant. In this way John Philpot died under the
hands of Edmund Bonner (18 December 1555). Smithfield itself was an important marketplace just outside the city of
London, and also the favourite place for public executions. Earlier the notorious Anne Askew was executed there (16 July
University Press, 1996], xv). The executions were not a typical Marian practice. Under Edward many religious radicals
were put to death by burning (for example Anabaptists Joan Bocher, 2 May 1550, and George van Parris, 24 April 1551,
see Irvin B. Horst, Anabaptism and the English Reformation to 1558 [Nieuwkoop: B. de Graaf, 1966], 77, 87). The mythical
portions of the martyrs dying at Smithfield strengthened the protestant case. See G.A. Williamson, ed. Foxe’s Book of

154 Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Mathewes,” 219. Though the Edwardian Reformation was commonly
held in great respect by Elizabethan Protestants, some radical Puritans, among whom also William Fulke, heavily criticized
its failure to establish a proper Protestant church. See Gunther, Reformation Unbound, 220-221. See for the reformation in
Edward’s time, MacCulloch, The Boy King, esp. 57-104.
of money for all kinds of licenses. All this to show that these bishops are not motivated by care for the people, but by love of money and luxury, he writes: “Did they not finde out a liuing before they foude out meete people for their calling? And did they not gather their stipendes and tythinges before they had gathered the scattered of the flocke?” The episcopal structure constitutes a sharp contrast with Browne’s covenantal idea of the church, in which the gathered community has priority over the singular officer. He then explains the bishop’s privilege to ordained clergy in terms of a 'theft':

They haue looked vs in the face, and haue stolen away our libertie. They tooke vs by the hande, as though they would leade vs, but they haue bounde our handes behind vs. For when we looked to chuse them for Pastours, they came vpon vs by force, and yoked vs to their parishes, and snared vs with inioynings, and did beate vs with penalties.

These words essentially echo the cry of Cartwright and the Admonitioners, who argued to let every parish elect and appoint its own ministers (§ 2.3.4. and § 2.3.5.). Likewise, Browne presents the English church as an oppressive system which tied the parishes and the ministry to the will of the bishop: instead of being sent by Christ, ordained ministers are sent by law; instead of being elected by consent of the church, ministers came ‘by force, and yoked us to their parishes.’ Browne scoffs at the episcopal ordination, saying: “Kneele downe ye Preachers, that the Bishoppe may ordayne you sitting in his chayre. His holie handes shall blesse you.” In other words, the present ordination of ministers is to the greater glory of the bishops and not Christ, and makes ministers acting on the authority of the bishops rather than Christ’s. Of which he jokes about with a cynic undertone: “Then must you take your Licenses in parchement, and paye well for them. Prepare a Boxe for your waxe, printe your message therein, and keepe touche with the Bishoppe, least he open you r Boxe, and your calling flye awaye.” The episcopal ordination is only testimony of abuse of power and the complete disavowal of the local congregation: there where Christ actually is present and where people partake of his covenantal promises. This, most clearly, does not mean that Browne rejected ordination altogether, for he only criticizes the episcopal right to ordained ministers instead of the local congregation. If ordination is the outward confirmation of a minister’s inward calling, then this should be performed there where Christ has placed his authority and

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157 Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Mattheue,” 220.
158 Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Mattheue,” 220.
159 Browne, “A Treatise vpon the 23. of Mattheue,” 220. Browne’s struggle with the need for a preaching license already appeared during his stay with Richard Greenham (see his biography in § 2.2.) who allowed Browne, knowingly not in the possession of a license, to use his pulpit.
sends his messengers. Browne’s unfinished tract ends with what looks like an incoherent argument for the displacement of preachers who lack a true calling.

3.3.4. Conclusion
Browne’s exposition of the first three verses of Matthew 23 has been shown to be a difficult document to read. This is partly due to its double argument: a critique of the learned clergy who so delighted in their education and superior knowledge that they neglected to nourish their flock, coupled with an argument for separation from the Church of England on the basis of a covenantal ecclesiology. However, as we found, both arguments are intimately connected. They both express Browne’s main conviction that ordained ministry rests upon Christ’s covenanting presence within the local congregation. His satirical criticism toward academic training only serves to make such a claim. It is therefore no mere dismissal of university degrees, as Parkin-Speer concluded, but his ‘rhetorical iconoclasm’ should be viewed as a dismissal of mere academic skills as sufficient proof of a true calling and the right handling of Scripture: ministers who abuse the message of preaching to celebrate logic and rhetoric instead of practical divinity.  

It follows, then, that Browne’s argument is largely congruent with the warning for eloquence we already encountered with his former mentor, Richard Greenham. In accordance with his idea of preaching as a practical orientated exposition of Scripture, Browne designs an ecclesiology that takes its point of departure in the local gathering of covenanted disciples. Preaching is henceforth describes a means by which people are brought into this covenantal bond, or kept within it. It further confirms Browne’s earlier covenantal distinction between church and civil society. This differentiation becomes particularly evident in Browne’s narrow conception of church discipline. For Calvin, and most Puritans, discipline also included social contact outside the communion of the church. It seems that Browne’s more developed idea of separation between church and state—as established in A Treatise of reformation—is here explained.

160 Harry Foreman already concluded this in 1983: “Here Browne is not so much attacking learning as warning against its abuse and the points he makes are valid, that is, that the clergy should be more concerned with the spiritual needs of their flock than with personal advancement and that learning was to be used for the edification of and benefit of all. In other words, he was stressing what he believed to be the true vocation of the clergy.” Foreman, “Robert Browne and Education,” 5. Cf. “It is a manifestation of the humanistic tendency to make eloquence the sole test of learning.” Lewis, English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, 30. A possible explanation why Browne might appear a rhetorical iconoclast in Parkin-Speer’s analysis, is due to her comparison with the moderate Puritan preacher Henry ‘Silver-tongued’ Smith, once a student of Richard Greenham as well. She mistakenly holds Smith for a representative of the ‘simple sermon style’, while he was in fact closer to the modern style, and made extensive use of rhetorical devices, including ancient languages and quotations of both Church Fathers and pagan philosophers. Smith’s biographer, R.B. Jenkins, writes: “Smith is well skilled in the uses of language and can almost always find the right rhetorical device to achieve his desired effect” (Henry Smith: England’s Silver-Tongued Preacher [Macon: Mercer University, 1983], 117; cf. Blench, Preaching in England, 182; also Elizabeth K. Hudson, “English Protestants and the imitatio Christi, 1580-1620,” SCJ 19, no. 4 [1998]: 541-558). Although it is not certain that Browne did in fact had Smith in mind with his criticism, he does fit the profile, being a moderate Puritan and fierce opponent of separatist option, see Jenkins, Henry Smith, 5-57.
as a covenantal difference. Though both have a place in God’s creation, they both also have a distinct purpose, structure and means. An ordained minister, again typified as a messenger of Christ, is closely tied to the covenant of the church as a means within God’s covenantal rule, or ‘covenantal agent’. This dependent status of the ministerial office is henceforth Browne’s foremost theological argument against the episcopal hierarchy. Since the office of bishops finds no basis in a local covenanted community, it can therefore be no true ministry sent by Christ. Moreover, as bishops have usurped the ecclesial power to ordain and associated with academic degrees and the right amount of money, they have put themselves over against Christ who only sends those whose life meets his divine calling and are able to handle Scripture rightly. It seems that Browne understands ordination primarily in relation to the outward calling, which is actually the church’s recognition of people with an inward calling. Browne’s emphasis on the handling of Scripture only further proves that Browne’s criticism toward university degrees did not come from mere anti-intellectualism, but from a serious concern for spiritual formation by practical sermons which applied the biblical text to the peoples’ lives. Browne discerns between an internal and an external calling. The first applies to the often mentioned divine calling by Christ, and the second applies to the congregational process of receiving these ‘Christ-sent’ messengers, which is made visible in ordination.

3.4. A Booke which sheweth the life and manners (1582)
The third part in Browne’s ‘1582-trilogy’ is his magnum opus, entitled A Booke which sheweth the life and manners of all true Christians. It is the grand exposition of his covenantal theology announced in his treatise on Matthew 23 above. A Book which sheweth is a catechesis structured after Ramist example pertaining “the pointes and partes of all diuinitie.” As already observed earlier, in our discussion of Richard Greenham (§ 2.3.6.), composing a doctrinal book was a very common practice among sixteenth century ministers, who thought it necessary for educating their (mostly) ignorant parishioners and combating superstition. Though the subtitle may have a polemical undertone—“howe vnlike they are vnto Turkes and Papistes and Heathen folke”—the generic character of the actual content makes it to a lesser extent determined by a specific polemical issue then his other writings. As said earlier, Browne makes extensive use of the Ramist method of dichotomization, i.e. working from definition to division, visualized by the characteristic system of brackets. The 185 catechetical questions are

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162 Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 221. William Haller is too quick in his judgement that “Browne’s writings . . . are not directed to the reader for the inspiration and edification of the weak and as yet unawakened.” Haller, The Rise of Partianism, 182. Earlier Burrage did more justice to its substance when judging it “the most sober and constructive part of the work,” to a degree that he thinks Browne intended it to be a Congregational Church Polity, not only for those Separatist groups, but “for the use of the people of England in reforming the Church of England!” Burrage, The Early English Dissenters, 1:102; also White, The English Separatist Tradition, 49.
likewise set out in four categories across two pages, consecutively: the state of the Christians, the state of heathen, definitions, and divisions. Browne’s incorporation of the second category fits well into the Puritan habit of confuting alternative teachings, *casu quo* warning against false doctrine. However, the extensive use of academic method is not a wholehearted embrace, since it is primarily to answer those “which refuse the truth, except it be hidden with curious art, and handled after the maner of their Schooles. . . . because they stand so much on Demonstrations, and Sylogisticall reasoninges.” More clearly than above, Browne criticizes the proponents of scholastic method, defending Ramist methodology instead: “Doe not Definitions containe the natures, the causes, the differences, the kindes and sortes of thinges, & will they make conclusions vpon Principles to be weake matters?” Hence, his use of logic is to “beate them with their owne weapons.” The entire work starts with the knowledge of God, continues with the redemption through Christ, the church, the sacraments, and ends with an extensive treatment of a Christian’s religious and civil duties. In the enclosed preface, Browne dedicates the contents both to the learned and the unlearned and explains its uses for both groups. Through the familiar catechesis-like ‘question and answer’ formulation, the reader is introduced in the central elements of Christian faith and living.

3.4.1. God, the Covenant and the Church (art. 1-43)

As he did in *A Treatise vpon the 23. of Matthewe*, Browne builds his entire theology upon the concept of covenant, which is presented as the preeminent way in which God’s accomplishes his salvific work. The opening question on the knowledge of God, “Wherefore are we called the people of God and Christians?,” is answered in covenantal language: “Because that by willing Couenaunt made with our God, we are vnder the gouernement of God and Christe, and thereby do leade a godly and Christian life.” In Browne’s view, true knowledge of God leads to a godly life within a covenantal bond with God: “they are redeemed by Christe vnto holines & happines for euer, frome whiche they were fallen by the sinne of Adam.” Though the prominence of the covenantal idea in Browne’s theological structure is reminiscent of the later development of federal theology.

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164 Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 223.
165 Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 223.
166 Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 223.
167 Browne also announces that he is planning to write a sort of commentary on the Book of Revelation, in order to give proof of the methodology set out in this tract, as he did in shortened fashion in his *A Treatise vpon the 23. of Matthewe* (“A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 225). However, as Burrage mentions in his listing of Browne’s works, it remained unwritten. See Burrage, *The True Story of Robert Browne*, 74.
168 Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 226.
169 Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 227.
(Lt. foedus, foederis) among Cambridge Presbyterians, such as notably Thomas Cartwright, Dudley Fenner, and William Perkins, unequivocal talk of a prelapsarian covenant is absent in his expose. Browne’s covenantal thought focuses entirely on the postlapsarian situation and is directly related to the doctrine of predestination (art. 34):

His Electing or chusing is his free consent or will in his eternall counsell, to saue vs for his names sake, without anie desert of oures, to make knowne his exceeding great mercies. His Predistinating of vs, is his full consent or counsaile, whereby he is setled to saue thise whom he hath chosen, and after that manner which pleaseth him and liketh him.

We should therefore understand Browne’s covenantal idea in line with the existent covenantal theology as found in the broader Reformed tradition and Elizabethan Puritanism. Many English Puritans took up the theme of covenant as Scripture’s leading structure to accentuate and keep together both divine initiative (‘election’) or the sovereign provision of salvation and human obligation (‘obedience’) or the faithful reception of salvation. Although humanity has fallen away from its original state by

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171 Federal theology is a specific type of covenantal theology which takes the biblical concept of covenant as basic framework for understanding the narrative of redemption found in Scripture by differentiating between a prelapsarian covenant of works made with Adam (Gen. 1-2) and a postlapsarian covenant of grace (Jer. 31:1-4) through Jesus Christ, the ‘second Adam’. See Weir, The Origins of the Federal Theology, esp. 3, 22, 55-56, 99.

172 Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 251.


“by the sinne of Adam” (art. 23). God initiated a new covenant which was promised to Abraham and fulfilled in Christ, known commonly as the covenant of grace. Browne seems to refer to this state with ‘happiness’: “His restoring of happines was his work of redemptiō, wherby the meanes is offered to all men for to be saued.” Within this covenantal state of happiness God promises salvation to those who obey the law by way of faith in Christ, which is generated by the inner testimony of the Spirit. Thus, a godly person could both experience the assurance of salvation, as well as be convinced of the need for moral piety. For this reason, the covenant contains both unilateral and bilateral elements, making it a two-sided agreement between ‘unequals’, God and people. Browne’s ‘own’ development is the application of this covenant of grace (viz. ‘gathering of the elect’) to the concrete reality of the ‘gathering of the faithful’ as the constituent of its existence as ‘church’. He writes under the definition of art. 35:

The Church planted or gathered, is a companie or number of Christians or beleueers, which by a willing couenant made with their God, are vnder the gouernment of god and Christ, and kepe his lawes in one holie communion: because Christ hath redeemed them vnto holines & happines for euer, from which they were fallen by the sinne of Adam.

It is important to notice that the voluntary character of this covenant, the ‘willingness’ of believers, obviously does not originate in their own choice but in God’s election and predestination. Stephen Brachlow shows convincingly how already within Presbyterian Puritanism the ethical implications of the covenant of grace led to a spirituality in which voluntary obedience became a hallmark of assurance. For it is among this gathered community, writes Browne, that God’s government is visibly expressed: “The Church gouernment, is the Lordshipp of Christ in the communion of his offices: wherby his people obey to his will, and haue mutual vse of their graces and callings, to further their godlines and welfare.” As such, the covenanted church is a visible expression of Christ’s Lordship.

Browne’s development, the ecclesiological translation of covenantal thought,
was only the logical ‘next step’ and would eventually become the hallmark of the later Separatists.\(^{181}\) God’s calling of people to participate in his covenant, according to Browne, occurs explicitly within the Christian community. There people visibly promise their obedience to God’s provision of redemption through their joining of the church covenant. Hence, Browne’s covenantal concept of the church shares these unilateral and bilateral emphases, which are unambiguously mentioned in his explanation of the ‘planting’ of a church:

36. Howe must the churche be first planted and gathered vnder one kinde of gouernement?
   First by a couenant and condicion, made on Gods behalfe. Secondlie by a couenant and condicion made on our behalfe. Thirdlie by vsing the sacrament of Baptisme to seale those condicions, and covenants.\(^{182}\)

The first covenant constitutes the church within God’s eternal promise of salvation within the covenant of grace on the condition of faithful obedience, which is itself again instigated by the inner confirmation of the Holy Spirit: “an inwarde working of the holy Ghost in our hartes, stirring and drawing vs to take Christe for our Sauiouer” (art. 37).\(^{183}\) And the second or human part of covenanting, exists out of an act of submission God and the church, both personally and as a family, accompanied by a public pledge of obedience to live a godly live (art. 38).\(^{184}\) It was because of the absence of this visible response to God’s call that Browne critiqued the practice of public preaching in places like Paul’s Cross in London. In the end, and thirdly, the covenant was ‘sealed’ by the sacrament of baptism.\(^{185}\)

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\(^{181}\) Cf. “It seemed to me that left to themselves the forces generated within popular protestantism could have no other end than a kind of congregationalism.” Collinson, *The Religion of the Protestants*, 250; also Collinson, “Towards a Broader Understanding of the Early Dissenting Tradition,” 20-21. B.R. White is right when asserting that Browne was not the first who used the church covenant as a foundational act to ‘plant’ a church (see his *The English Separatist Tradition*, 160-161), yet he was nonetheless the first who employed a full covenantal ecclesiology.\(^{182}\)

\(^{182}\) Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 254.

\(^{183}\) Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 255.

\(^{184}\) Paul Fiddes is unsure of Browne description that these two covenantal acts do in fact relate to the eternal covenant of grace in Christ, in as much as he assesses that “Browne is immediately concerned with the nature of the local congregation as being under the direct government of Christ, and obliged to keep his laws.” (Tracks and Traces: Baptist Identity in Church and Theology [SBHT, vol. 13; Eugene: Wipf and Stock, (2003), 2006], 28). In my estimation this uncertainty is unnecessary when reading Browne’s articles pertaining the planting of the church in light of his earlier description of election and redemption (artt. 31-35).

It is within the context of baptism, that Browne first clearly states the purpose of the ordained ministry. For a truthful baptism needs to be preceded by preaching, and preaching necessitates a true messenger of God: “By preaching the worde of Baptisme, we understande not the blinde reading, or fruitles prating thereof at randome, but a due teaching by lawfull messengers, of our redemption, mortifying, and raysing with Christ.”\textsuperscript{186} It follows that although the ‘planting’ (and not ‘founding’ or ‘establishing’) of a church does not first require a preaching ministry but the faithful obedience of people, the need for ordained ministry does flow directly from the covenantal bond. Like Greenham did in his catechesis, Browne perceives an immediate relation between a covenanted people and the preaching ministry as a divine provision. He takes up his mentioning of ‘messengers’, which he already used earlier to explain the different ways in which God’s interacts with his covenantal community (art. 20). He now more overtly defines messengers as ‘preachers’ who, with regard to baptism, explain from Scripture its significance within the covenantal relationship to God. Behind Browne’s urge for Scriptural preaching in relation to baptism lies the common Puritan hostility toward ‘blind reading’ or the mere reading of printed homilies (see § 2.4). As said, for Puritans, the lively declaration of the salvific truths of Scripture was the divinely ordained instrument to bring people to faith (cf. Rom. 10:14). The importance of preaching for the covenantal existence of the church therefore requires people who are, in the words of Browne, “called and meete thereto.”\textsuperscript{187} Which means, people who are able to show right understanding of Christ’s redemption, and thus are “knowne to be sent of God.”\textsuperscript{188} While Browne’s restrictions are to be understood over against a priestly concept of ministry, it does signify a considerable recognition of a divine legitimation behind the preaching ministry. Yet before offering a more detailed explanation of the role of the ordained ministry, he first provides a further explication of the ‘offices of Christ’.

3.4.2. The Graces and Offices in Christ (art. 44-58)
The upbuilding of the church begins first with the participation in the graces and offices of Christ, then, secondly by communion of the graces and offices in the church, and thirdly by the partaking in the Lord’s Supper as seal of this communion. Together these three make up Browne’s subsequent section about the structure of the covenanted church. With the ‘communion of graces’ Browne seems to intend the covenantal relationship between Christ and his church in which there is “a mutuall vsing of friendshippe and callings.”\textsuperscript{189} In other words, the character of the covenant is not defined

\textsuperscript{186} Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 259.
\textsuperscript{187} Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 260.
\textsuperscript{188} Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 261.
\textsuperscript{189} Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 263.
in the terms of power and usurpation, as are the trademarks of antichrist, but by friendship and provision.

Through Christ’s threefold office\textsuperscript{190} the gathered community joins in the fellowship with God: as a Priest he justifies his church,\textsuperscript{191} by his prophethood he instructs them in his laws,\textsuperscript{192} and by his Kingship he rules and disciplines his church.\textsuperscript{193} Similar as in the rest of Reformed theology, Browne draws for his theology of ministry on a convergence between the communal offices of Christ and the ministerial offices in the church. Especially in Browne’s explanation of Christ’s prophethood there is a strong connection to ordained ministers, as his favorable term ‘messenger’ reappears. For Christ exercises his prophethood, besides his laws and callings, also by way of his special messengers, who function as a lengthening piece of his rule: “He preacheth vnto vs by his worde & message in the mouthes of his messengers.”\textsuperscript{194} The general callings and duties mentioned are the universal obligations for every believer within the covenantal relationship to God, which Browne addresses extensively from article 82 upwards, forming the major part of the book.\textsuperscript{195} It shows that, while the whole congregation participates in Christ’s prophethood, these messengers do this in a distinctive way. Connecting the role of preachers to Christ’s prophetic office places Browne distinctively within the Protestant reassessment of ordained ministry.\textsuperscript{196} Browne explains, “His preaching by his seruantes, is the message he giueth to those whom he sendeth, to vse the obedience of his people in learning, that they might knowe his lawes and his will.”\textsuperscript{197} While the whole church participates in the threefold office of Christ, these messengers function particularly as a visible expression of Christ’s teaching, as means by which he provides his people with the content of his rule. Central is Browne’s idea of ‘sending’ in this regard. A messenger is a ‘missionary’ or ‘ambassador’, who receives the message of Christ for the upbuilding of his church. In this way, the church as a communion, also employs its participation in the offices of Christ through the presence of these


\textsuperscript{191} “The Priesthoode of Christ is his office of mediation and seruice in the church, for attonement and sanctification, whereby all sinne and uncleannes is taken away.” Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 263.

\textsuperscript{192} “The Prophecie of Christ is his office of teaching and giuing lawes to his people, whereby he useth their obedience to learne and know the same.” Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 265.

\textsuperscript{193} “The kingdome of Christ, is his office of gouernement, whereby he vseth the obedience of his people to keepe his lawes & commaundements, to their saluation and welfare.” Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 267.

\textsuperscript{194} Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 264. Cf. David C. Steinmetz, \textit{Taking the Long View: Christian Theology in Historical Perspective} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 81: “A prophet for them was a messenger from God, someone who like the ancients prophets of Israel carried an important and authoritative Word.”

\textsuperscript{195} See Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 296-395.

\textsuperscript{196} See Steinmetz, \textit{Taking the Long View}, 89.

\textsuperscript{197} Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 265.
messengers. Browne offers a further explanation in a separate article in which he notes the manner in which the church participates in the graces and offices of Christ: “It hath those which haue office of teaching and guiding. Also those which haue office of cherishing and relieuing the afflicted & poore. Also it hath the graces of all the brethren and people to doe good withall.”198 The first form of official ministry, he mentions, embodies the teaching role of the messengers. The second, more or less encapsulates what is usually understood as a deacon, though the specific terms are not yet used here. Besides these two offices of teaching and relieving, Browne also includes the rest of the membership who all have received Christ’s graces to do the good. Hereby he probably refers to the general calling and duties. It is worth mentioning that only ‘the office of teaching and guiding’ receives a further explanation under the header ‘Definition’: “The office of teaching and guiding, is a charge or message committed by God vnto those which haue grace and giftes for the same, and thereto are tried and duelie receyued of the people, to use their obedience in learning and keeping the lawes of God.”199 In this definition Browne explains how the messenger receives its ecclesial status as an officer of teaching and guiding. ‘Office’ is described as a coming together of a divine charge—which in all probability corresponds with his idea of calling—and a congregational recognition and trial of this person’s calling. Suddenly Browne joins his earlier concept of divine ‘sending’ with the idea of congregational reception. The covenantal foundation beneath this definition is obvious. Official ministry comes into existence through the joining of a divine charge (‘calling’) and a congregational reception.

How firm Browne’s concept of ordained ministry bears this distinct character within the covenanted church, becomes even more clear in what follows. In an article in which he explains the different ways in which this form of official ministry is exercised, Browne shows himself a supporter of a synodic structure, existing out of three sorts of meetings: synods, prophesyings, and the local eldership.200 A synod is a meeting of ‘many churches’ and not first of church officers.201 He gave these gatherings undeniably a role with respect to the local congregation, but how exactly is hard to determine. Remembering Browne’s earlier critique of the bishops’ office, his acceptance of synodic structure (being above the local church) seems contradictory. However, it is helpful to see how Browne paints us the opposite picture in his category ‘The State of the Heathen’. An important difference is his substitution of term ‘charge’ for ‘power’.202 A distinction that reveals Browne’s basic problem with the bishops. It is not so much the supralocal

198 Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 268.
199 Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 269.
200 See Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 270-271.
201 According to Alan Sell this means that these synods were actually gatherings of entire local churches and not just representatives (see his Saints, 14-15). Yet, since Browne is quite unclear how he intended ‘manie churches together’ this cannot be determined with certainty. For representativeness is by Browne not strictly excluded nor objected to, he only seems to contrast his synodic model with the singular bishops who asks solely on his own authority.
202 Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 270.
position, but that the power of the English bishops does not originate in the covenantal relationship between God and his congregation. A bishop’s charge is not recognized by a company of believers, and can therefore not be held accountable for his exercise. This definition implies a restricted role of these synods, as they are predominantly orientated on disciplinary matters and support that goes beyond local proportions. An understanding of synods with which Browne follows the Presbyterian example. 203 Browne’s appropriation of a synodic structure provides a valuable insight in his ecclesiological position, certainly when taking into account Polly Ha’s claim that the recognition of synodal authority developed to be a characteristic of English Presbyterians. 204 In any case, Rosemary O’Day’s claim—that Browne stressed the congregational independence more than the Presbyterians did—proves to be doubtful. 205

In this way synods represent a sum of the authority of local congregations. A ‘prophecy’ is a meeting for ‘teachers’ as well as laymen to develop their skills and knowledge. The joint meetings of preaching ministers was a valued practice among Puritans, often seeking each other’s company for learning (‘sermons ad clerum’) and support. 206 It is telling that Browne incorporates these Puritan practices within his own idea of church government. The last structure, he mentions, is the local eldership, which he defines as a local meeting of the elders within a particular church primarily for matters of church government (decision-making) and disciplinary issues: “Eldership is Ioyning or partaking of the authoritie of Elders, or forwardest and wysest in a peaceable meeting, for redressing and decding of matters in particular Churches, and for counsaile therein.” 207 In short, the eldership forms the disciplinary council of a particular church made up of a number of members. How the aforementioned offices of teaching and relieving relate to this council is absent in his explanation.

Most interesting for our study is the following part in which Browne, parallel to the synodic structure, poses a structure of official ministries along the line of the fivefold pattern pictured in Ephesians 4:11. Yet, different from his contemporaries, who distinguished between temporary and permanent as we noted in the previous chapter, Browne makes his distinction between supralocal and local offices. The apostles, prophets and evangelists “had charge ouer many churches,” and pastors and teachers,

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203 Cf. “The national leaders, Cartwright, Travers and Field, were no doubt fullblooded Presbyterians, who advocated and even attempted to set up classical and synodal structures. But some of the theoretical literature of the period was reticent on the delicate question of how these structures were to be related to the local churches, and it may be that whenever their own interests were involved, most Elizabethan Puritans would have been reluctant to concede to synods anything beyond the power to ‘counsel’ and ‘advise’ allowed in later years by the Independents. They would have derived such powers upwards, from the constituent congregations, and not downwards, from a true ministerial and synodical hierarchy.” Collinson, “Towards a Broader Understanding of the Early Dissenting Tradition,” 16.

204 See Ha, English Presbyterianism, 17, 47-55.

205 See O’Day, The English Clergy, 239.


207 Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 271.
have their “charge in one Churche onely”.208 If and how Browne exactly envisions the first group of supralocal offices to function remains rather vague. The use of the past tense suggests they these offices have passed with the apostolic age, yet Browne nowhere explicitly says so. Moreover, Browne uses the present tense in the definition: “An Apostle is a person hauing office . . .”209 He nowhere offers a further explication how these offices are installed in a more detailed manner, nor does he discuss the question how these offices are different from the episcopal office. The fact that apostles, prophets and evangelists are connected with ‘many churches’, could also suggest that they are somehow related to synods. His inclusion of these offices besides local offices does, nevertheless, hints at his attempt to return to a more biblical warranted theology of ministry. When considering the local offices, his definitions are much more clear:

A Pastor is a person hauing office and message of God, for exhorting & mouing especially and guiding accordinglie: for the which he is tried to be meete, & thereto is duelie chosen by the church which calleth him, or receyued by obedience where he planteth the Church.

A Teacher of doctrine is a person hauing office and message of God, for teaching especiallie and guiding accordinglie, with lesse gifte to exhorte and applie, for the which he is tried to be meete, and thereto is duelie chosen by the church wich calleth him, or receyued by obedience, where he planteth the church.

An Elder or more forward in gifte is a person hauing office and message of God, for oversight and counsaile, and redressing thinges amisse, for the which he is tried. &c.210

What immediately stands out is the addition of ‘the elder’ as a sixth office, without further explanation, to the list of Ephesians 4:11. It does provide a better picture of the relation between the office of teaching to the mentioned eldership. Moreover, Browne’s threefold form of local office is now in complete harmony with the Presbyterian structure of Bucer and Calvin.211 Like them, Browne differentiates the office of teaching in the two offices of Ephesians 4:11, the pastor and teacher, aided by the elders. A significant difference between the definitions of the teaching offices and the elders is the explicit language of ‘office and message of God’ combined with congregational election and reception which is lacking in the latter. In other words, the dual framework of charge and reception, mentioned above, is by Browne only applied to these teaching offices. This would

208 Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 272, 274.
210 Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 275.
coincide with the broader Reformed reception of Ephesians 4:11 to denote the divine side of offices of pastor and teacher. Besides the official ministries of Ephesians 4:11 en the eldership, Browne also mentions the two other offices, namely the relievers or deacons, and widows. The inclusion of these ‘offices of outward provision’, as they are called, is not uncommon in Browne’s context.²¹² Browne understands deacons to meet the practical needs of people and the widows to pray and visit the afflicted. Hence, these offices have a different charge than the offices of Ephesians 4:11.

After the explanation of the special ministries, Browne returns to the participation of the whole church in the threefold office of Christ. This is as if he wants to ensure that his recognition of special offices is not to leading to exempting the membership: “Because euery one of the church is made a Kinge, a Priest, and a Prophet vnder Christ, to vpholde and further the Kingdom of God.”²¹³ It is striking that Browne explains the congregational sharing in the offices of Christ particularly from the angle of church discipline “to subdue the wicked, and make one another obedient to Christ.”²¹⁴ All members are authorized to rule with Christ “and watch one another” (Kingship), to pray for themselves and others, and “turne others from iniquitie” (Priesthood), and to teach others “and tell one an other their dueties” (Prophethood).²¹⁵ It seems that Browne’s idea of general ministry exists chiefly out of a high estimation of the importance of mutual edification and rebuke.²¹⁶ As such the whole congregation shares in the responsibilities of the ordained ministry, yet in a more casual and unofficial fashion.

3.4.3. The Lord’s Supper (art. 59-63)

The differentiation between a general ministry and an ordained ministry appears once again in his explanation of the administration of the Lord’s Supper. Like baptism earlier, Browne emphasizes that its administration should proceed from the Word “duelie preached.”²¹⁷ The need for adequate preaching is in Browne’s view specifically to counter superstition and erroneous papal interpretations and educate people in a Reformed understanding: “The death and tormentes of Christ, by breaking his bodie and sheading his bloud for our sinnes, must be shewed by the lawfull preacher. Also he must shewe the spirituall vse of the bodie & bloud of Christ Iesus, by a spirituall feeding thereon, and

²¹² See Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 274-275. Taking up the widows in the line of offices was already done by Cartwright (Peel, Tracts ascribed to Richard Bancroft, 52) and Calvin (Inst. IV, 13, 18).
²¹³ Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 276.
²¹⁴ Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 277.
²¹⁵ Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 276-278. This is consistent with Browne’s high evaluation of fellowship, in which “we have & looke for, by mutuall vse of the companie, graces and dueties one of another.” (Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 303).
²¹⁶ See also Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 324-327.
With his use of ‘lawfulness’ Browne takes over the distinctive Puritan vocabulary that seeks to connect ministerial offices more directly with Scripture, a ministry divinely called and received in the local congregation. In a subsequent article, Browne more or less gives an liturgical overview of the spiritual celebration of the Lord’s Supper, which is characterized by the ‘pronouncement’ of the preacher, instead of ‘enchantment’ by reading, “that by fayth they might feede thereon spirituallie . . . . for remission of sinnes.” For in the pronouncement sounds the “authoritie of God in the message of the Preacher,” Browne further explains in the definition. It can be concluded, therefore, that the preacher is the designated person to preside the Lord’s Supper and who partakes first and then divides both bread and wine among the members, to keep the congregation to a truthful celebration of the Supper.

3.4.4. Church and Governance (art. 112-124)

After an extended note on the Old Testament ceremonies as shadows of the redemption in Christ (artt. 64-81), and a larger section about the duties of a godly life (artt. 82-111), Browne returns to the theme of church organization, setting out the duties of both ecclesial and other sorts of governance. He now uses the more inclusive term ‘governors’ to denote this broader category of governance. Though he still keeps ecclesial and civil governance separated, they both rely on people’s consent. Authority, hence, is to Browne a coming together of divine charge or calling and the voluntary obedience from the people for their mutual benefit. It is interesting that the gifts with which governors must be provided with, are all fairly natural, forwardness in knowledge and godliness, age and eldership, and (in some cases) noble blood. It shows how Browne was in line with Calvin’s inclusion of the Genevan ‘Seigneury’ in ecclesial governance. Moreover, it strengthens our earlier observation that Browne’s distinction between church and state does not carry any hint of anarchy, or even social withdrawal. Rather, he aims to continue the example of Calvin and the Cambridge Presbyterians, and emphasizes their distinguished place within God’s rule. Both, however, require the ‘consent’ of the people.

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218 Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 282.
219 Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 284.
221 See Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 287-328.
222 In his description of the political structures of civil society, he does make a comparison between the ecclesial structures and civil structures of government. Both ecclesial and civil offices (should) receive their authority from God in combination with the consent of the people. See further Chavura, Tudor Protestant Political Thought, 208-209.
223 Cf. “Our gouernement is our Lordshipp, authoritie, or chieftie, ouer anie, whereby wee vse their obedience and servise, to partake vnto them the vse & graces of our authoritie and guiding.” Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 329.
224 Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 330; This ‘oligarchic view’ of ecclesial office is not far off from the Genevan example, where Calvin implemented a very similar idea, cf. Alexandre Ganoczy, “Calvin’s Life,” The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 16, 20; Chavura, Tudor Protestant Political Thought, 208; and Herman A. Speelman, Calvin and the Independence of the Church (RHT, Bd. 25; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 111.
The recognition of the need for popular consent, makes Browne’s political theology—according to Stephen Chavura—dissonant with his time. For, just as church officials, Browne writes that for civil magistrates, “there must be an agreement of the people or Common welth.” It is remarkable to see how Browne on the one hand makes a sharp distinction between ecclesial and civil matters, and, on the other hand, brings them under the same umbrella of human authority with parallel structures. Both forms of government require to be personally assured of their gift, have a special charge of God to exercise their gift, and the agreement of men, as mentioned above. Personal assurance is “a conscience of our ablenes to followe that calling, because we knowe our owne readiness to doo all the duties thereof.” Under these gifts Browne understands—as said earlier—knowledge, age and right ancestry. Whether this last category also pertains to ecclesial offices is not clear, however. The divine charge, which appears frequently, is here explained as a divine message which is conveyed through the opportunity to exercise their gifts, a special prophecy, or even a special working of God’s Spirit into the conscience. Again, it is unclear if Browne understands them as complementary criteria, or not. His attention seems to go rather to a further explanation of his idea of congregational consent:

118. What agreement must there be of the church, for the calling of church gouernours?
   They must trie their guiftes and godlines.
   They must receyue them by obedience as their guides and teachers, where they plante or establish the church.
   They must receyue them by choyse where the church is planted.

Browne’s explanation of congregational consent is consistent with the Presbyterian plea for a local embedded ministry by election of the local congregation. It is local membership who are entrusted with testing the authenticity of a governors’ calling and subsequently ‘receive’ them by election. This is placed by Browne against the practice in which government is obtained by “outward bragge, or countenaunce of authoritie, or by flatterings and pleasings.” It is, moreover, interesting that the language of reception returns here, although it is not sure of with ecclesial governors Browne implies both the official ministries and the elders. His usage of the term ‘receiving’ infers that the authority

225 Cf. “What was not conventional was that Browne offered a model of magisterial legitimacy drawn from his belief in congregational sovereignty. . . . Browne simply lifted the criterion from his ecclesiology and applied it to civil authority.” Chavura, *Tudor Protestant Political Thought*, 208.
226 Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 334.
227 Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 331.
228 Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 332.
229 Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 336.
of governors does not coincide with their personality, but with God’s charge, as stated above. Consequently, it is the community who by their communal election provides the congregational support for the exercise of authority and, hence, confirms the covenantal bond. In article 119 Browne offers his most explicit explanation of how congregation election is to be performed:

The praiers and humbling of all, with fasting and exhortation, that God may be chiefe in the choise.
The consent of the people must be gathered by the Elders or guides, and testified by voice, presenting, or naming of some, or other tokens, that they approve them as meete for that calling.
The Elders or forwardest must ordeine, and pronounce them, with prayer and imposition of handes, as called and authorised of God, and receyued of their charg to that calling.
Yet imposition of handes is no essentiaall pointe of their calling, but it ought to be left, when it is turned into pompe or superstition.

The ecclesiastical language betrays how much Browne writes in view of the church, more than he does for civil society, as Chavura posed. And, since it presumes the presence of elders, Browne most probably has in mind the process of appointing the official ministries, notably the aforementioned pastor and teacher. The elders are responsible for gathering the congregational consent and for subsequently ordaining the specific candidate. This communal form of election and ordination is by Browne put in sharp contrast with the episcopal form of licensing at the bishop’s will. Instead, he argues, ordination should be rooted in congregational choice, which, together with the gifting and charging of the candidate, are the ways in which God provides his church with an official ministry. Hence, ordination is the expression of a covenantal process of seeking a lawful minister performed by the elders: “The ordayning by some of the forwardest & wisest, is a pronoucing the with prayer & thanksgiuing, & laying on of hands (if such imposition of handes bee not turned into pompe or superstition) that they are called and authorised of God, & receyued of their charge to that calling.” The first thing that stands out is the warning against superstition in similar wording as appears in Calvin’s Ecclesiastical Ordinances of 1541 (§ 2.3.2.), and in the Admonition (§ 2.3.5.). Stripped

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231 Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 337.
233 According to David Hall it is precisely because of his rejection of the license to preach, that Browne broke with the English Church: “Browne and Harrison turned separatist because they feared that as ministers they lacked validity as means of grace.” Hall, The Faithful Shepherd, 29.
234 Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 341.
235 See J.K.S. Reid, Calvin: Theological Treatises (The Library of Christian Classics; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, [1954], 2006), 59: “As to the manner of introducing him, it is good to use the imposition of hands, which
of its sacerdotal implications, the church, in the act of laying on of hands, brings the whole process of ministerial election to a close by the joining together of calling, authorization and reception. Ordination functions as the public reception of the candidate as actually send by God. Henceforth, ordination is a public and outward statement of the coming together of divine commission and congregational reception, and a visible sign of the covenant.

In the last part of Browne’s instruction regarding governors, he mainly describes their role in terms of teaching and guiding, particularly by instructing Scripture and the grounds of religion and moral life. By describing ecclesial governance in terms of teaching, Browne intends to amplify the difference with the episcopal enforced ministry, whose authority rests on force and control, as an example of exercising authority by voluntary obedience: “Their directing and guiding is a duetie of their gouernement, vsing the obedience of others in following them, to doe anie thing with them or after thē.” Ecclesial governance, requires governors capable of listening to questions, doubts and opinions of people, and help them find guidance in Scripture. The rest of the book deals with the subsequent duties of Christians regarding state and society, marriage and Christian living, which have no direct bearing upon this study.

3.4.5. Conclusion
Our close reading of Browne’s catechetical work has shown how pervasively the concept of covenant shaped his idea of church, ministry and society. The separate roles of church and state, and their separate ‘covenants’, reappear expressively in Browne’s explanation of the duties of governors which he uses as a general term for those ‘in authority’. In both church and society, the appointment of governors should rest on the support (‘consent’) of the local church. The local church, as the gathering of believers, is the visible expression of God’s elective calling to his covenant of grace. In this way, Browne’s ‘congregational’ ecclesiology firmly holds to the Calvinistic framework that attributes salvation entirely to God’s sovereign work. It is among those who respond with obedience to his call, that Christ is present in his threefold office, providing the gathered church with the benefits of his rule, among which the ordained ministry. Hence, Browne’s idea of voluntarism (‘willingness’) should therefore not be confused with a noncommittal attitude or as

ceremony was observed by the apostles and then in the ancient Church, providing that it take place without superstition and without offence.” Cf. Van der Borght, Theology of Ministry, 77.

236 Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 346-349.


238 See Browne, “A Booke which sheweth the life and manners,” 380-395. The distinction Browne makes between civil, ecclesiatical and domestical duties is also present in Cartwright’s catechesis, see Cartwrightiana, 163.
underwriting practices like ‘sermon-gadding,’ but with what Collinson calls a “secondary voluntarism,” which originates from divine predestination.

Prominent in Browne’s concept of ordained ministry in this work is Ephesians 4:11. While absent in his literature thus far, it appears now to provide Browne with a Biblically rooted theology of ministry. He seems to have struggled with the continuing significance of the first three offices ('apostles, prophets, and evangelists'), and nowhere explicitly rejects their permanence. Rather he seems to suggest that these three belong to the larger covenantal bond of many churches (synods and prophesyings), and that 'pastors and teachers' are considered local forms of ministry. Browne leaves us in the dark pertaining the question if all five offices are also ordained offices, since he nowhere offers a further elaboration of the first three offices. Locally, Browne adds elders to the pastor and teacher, to help the ordained ministry in their task. Furthermore, two other ministries are mentioned with a more practical charge, the deacon and the widow. It seems, however, that only the pastor and teacher are entrusted with preaching, teaching and the administration of the sacraments. This covenantal understanding of ministry becomes most evident in Browne’s returning term ‘messenger’, which now more clearly appears as the ‘lively voice’ send to accompany the Word of God, as the visible expression of the church’s participation in Christ’s prophethood. On the face of it, the local ministries of pastor and teacher are the local embodiments of this participation.

Browne’s terminology of ‘sending’ and ‘receiving’ connects this concept of messenger with his covenantal thought. It follows that the ordained ministry has no independent stature, but is grounded in God’s covenant with the gathered community. Ordained ministry comes to existence by the coupling of a divine charge (‘sending’) and a congregational recognition (‘reception’) expressed in ordination. The divine charge appears to run quite parallel with what Browne previously called the ‘inward calling’. It should be noted that Browne’s employs a broad interpretation of the concept of ‘gifts’, which extends well beyond what are commonly termed the charismatic gifts, including ancestry and age. The ‘outward calling’ is again identified with the congregational consent. With this covenantal approach to ordination, Browne takes a stance against the one-sided episcopal ordination process, in which a minister was posted in local parish by a sovereign decision of a bishop. It is important to notice that Browne does not understand the prophethood of the ordained minister as an exclusive right. The congregation participates in its own way in the prophethood of Christ, be it not in a public way, but in private conversations. Considering the rite of ordination, Browne joins the common practice of laying on of hands, accompanied by the typically Reformed

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239 See Collinson, The Religion of the Protestants, esp. 242-283; and Hunt, The Art of Hearing, 14, and esp. 187-228. ‘Sermon-gadding’ was a increasing phenomenon in the later Elizabethan era, in which mostly Puritan laypeople travelled distances to hear new and more affective preachers, instead of their own parish minister. It is very similar to the consumerist church ethos, commonly referred to as ‘church shopping’ or ‘church hopping’.

240 Collinson, The Religion of the Protestants, 251.
disclaimer that it must not be understood in sacerdotal terms. The explicit role of elders in the rite of ordination, makes it difficult to determine if they are also ordained themselves. It seems more likely that they represent the congregation’s consent, and representatively perform the ordination as public recognition of God’s charge upon the live of the particular person.

Striking is furthermore Browne’s positive embrace of what is usually conceived of as a Presbyterian concept: a synodic structure. Though later Congregationalists, such as Henry Jacob, may have ended up rejecting the synodic structure, Browne combined his idea of a local gathering of believers with a broader synodic network of churches, acknowledging even the possibility of ecclesial authority beyond the local community. To him the local authority to appoint ministers and discernment of disciplinary matters, did not exclude a meeting of ‘many churches’ for mutual support and betterment. He even seem to have recognized ecclesial offices beyond the local gathering, related to the supralocal gatherings of synods and prophesyings. The precise nature and character of these offices remains unclear, however.

In short, the ordained ministry, which probably exists only out of the office of pastor and teacher—seeing he exclusively speaks of guiding and teaching and his heavy emphasis upon teaching and preaching as the substance of ordained ministry—are distinct callings of God, yet recognized by the entire membership, to serve their joint covenant with God. As such they can be called ‘covenantal agents’, that is to say, ‘means’ of the church’s covenantal participation in Christ, to sustain the church’s covenantal life. Browne’s treatment of the God’s covenantal rule by voluntary obedience is put explicitly over against the episcopal government of his day, characterized by enforced obedience through (canon) legislation. Browne’s exclusive covenantal approach to ministerial office also makes up his most important argument against the episcopal office. For whereas a bishop stands outside a covenanted congregation, he can have no authority in the local congregation.

3.5. A True and Short Declaration (1583)
The fourth publication of interest is A True and Short Declaration, which we already encountered in the reconstruction of Browne’s biography (§ 2.2.). Originally this autobiographical document has no name, no place, or even a date attributed to its

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241 Polly Ha, in her study of English Presbyterians, argues for distinction between Presbyterians and Congregationalists almost exclusively on the basis of Henry Jacob who defended the absolute autonomy and independency of the local congregation (see English Presbyterianism, 17, 47-55). This distinction may be true of seventeenth-century developments, but creates unnecessarily division when applied to the situation in the 1580’s.

242 Browne’s appropriation of a synodic structure places him emphatically within the context of Presbyterian theology instead of Anabaptist ecclesiology and ideas of local independence etc. Contra Jacob G. de Hoop Scheffer, History of the Free Churchmen, called the Brownists, Pilgrim Fathers and Baptists in the Dutch Republic 1581-1701 (Ithaca: Andrus & Church, 1921), 6-8; and Sell, Saints, 14-15. Sell’s assessment that Browne only attributed synods with an advisory role is unlikely, for Browne considers these meetings ‘more weighty’.
publication. There is, however, broad consensus regarding Browne’s authorship. Its full
title is *A True and Short Declaration, Both of the Gathering and Ioyning together of
Certaine Persons: and also of the Lamentable Breach and Division which fell amongst
them*, and it originates probably shortly before Browne’s return to Britain in late 1583.
While the name of its printer is not given, the formatting suggests that it was done by an
amateur. Like *A Treatise vpon the 23. of Matthewe*, this document too breaks off
abruptly after the spelling, the punctuations, and capitalization already have become
“increasingly frantic” as Peel and Carlson comment in their critical edition. It is an
indication that the printer was rushing his work and eventually decided or was prohibited
from finishing it altogether. Nonetheless, *A True and Short Declaration* is arguably
Browne’s second famous writing and crucial for understanding his developing life and
thought during his Separatist years. The contents roughly cover Browne’s life from his
education at Cambridge to the break in his community in Middelburg. Besides this
historical content, some sections are also of importance to determine his theological
stance. These more theological oriented fragments are most likely derived from a letter
Browne wrote to Robert Harrison prior to their flight to the Netherlands, in order to
convince him of the need for separation. Therefore, despite its subjectivity, it remains
as Patrick Collinson writes, a “fascinating account of the development of his radical
thought,” and hence an invaluable resource for understanding Browne’s ecclesiology.
It should last of all be noted that Browne generally writes from a third person point of
view.

3.5.1. The Right Ordering of the Church
Browne starts off with placing his own ecclesiological journey within the context of
Cambridge University, where he became concerned with “the vvofull and lamētable state
off the church.” It is worthwhile considering the previous chapter, that he specifically
mentions having participated in multiple debates—possibly in connection to
Cartwright’s lectures and dismissal (§ 2.3.4.)—, in which he was convinced of the

243 This is largely based on inconsistent punctuation, capitalization, and abbreviation, leaving an amateuristic
impression. It is very likely that Browne himself is responsible for its printing, as is suggested by Peel and Carlson (see the
introduction to “A True and Short Declaration,” in *The Writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Browne*, 396). For Puritan
printing in the Netherlands, see Keith L. Sprunger, *Trumpets from the Tower: English Puritan Printing in the Netherlands,
244 See Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 427-429.
245 Cf. “A True and Short Declaration, for example, is an autobiographical apologie for Browne’s course of
246 Cf. “But because R.H. named such & such often times, vwhich he said, feared God, & were sorouefull for
their sinnes, vnto him both bie vword and vvriting, that he had small ca use to do so.” Browne, “A True and Short
Declaration,” 412. Burrage thinks this unknown document to be written in 1581 and lists it first in his listing of Browne
works, see Burrage, *The True Story of Robert Browne*, 74.
248 Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 397.
deficient status of the English church due to the lack of sufficient discipline. It caused him
to rethink the church: “he wholly bent him selfe to search [sic, search] & find out the
matters of the church: as how it vvas to be guided & ordered.”249 His search for
reformation, then, brought him to the household seminary of Richard Greenham, who
allowed him to use his pulpit, knowingly without having possession of a preaching
license. The reason Browne offers for his own nonconformity repeats the same
Presbyterian call made by Cartwright: “he judged that the church vvas to call and receaue
him, if he should be there chosen and appointed to preach.”250 It was the recognition of
the congregational prerogative, rather than bishops, to appoint their own ministers that
changed his entire ecclesiology:

Then did he thinck on this, whoe should be chiefest, or haue charge before
others, to looke to such matters. For the bishops take vppon them the chieftie,
but to be called and authorised by them, he thought it vnlawvfull. And vwhy he
vvvas of this minde, he had these & such like vvarrantes: namelee thei shoulde be
chiefest, vwhich partake vnto vs the chiefest graces and vse of their callinges. And
that doeth Christ, as it is vvritten, of his fullnes haue all vve receaued, and grace
for grace. Ioh. 1. 16. And to him hath God made all thinges subject saieth Paul,
Ephes. 1. 22. euë vnder his feet, and hath appointed him ouer all thinges, to be
head of the church, vwhich is his bodie, euuen the fullnes of him, vwhich filleth all
in all thinges. Novve next vnder Christ, is not the bishop of the dioces, by vvhōe
so manie mischiefes are vrought, nether anie one vwhich hath but single
authoritie, but first thei that haue their authoritie together: as first the church,
vwhich Christ also teacheth, vwhere he saieth, If he vvill no vouchsafe to heare
them tell it vnto the church, & if he refuse to heare the church also, let him be
vnto the[e], as an heathen mâ & a publican, Mat. 18. 17.251

According to his own words, Browne’s major struggle with the English church is focused
on the episcopacy, which in his view led to the displacement of the role of the local church.
Instead of the singular bishop, it is first the whole membership of the church which shares
in Christ’s authority and graces (Eph. 1:22), and should therefore have priority over its
officers. Important is Browne’s reference to Matthew 18:17, which he interprets as a
direct instruction of Christ concerning the constitutive power of the gathering of the
church. Frederick Powicke, for this reason, argues that Browne on this point broke off his
relation with the Presbyterians and developed his ‘Congregationalist’ position.252 An

249 Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 397.
250 Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 399; cf. “being at this time clearly of Presbyterian inclination, like
251 Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 399; cf. “and this fact brought him face to face with the question
whether ordination, or even licensing, by a bishop could be tolerated by him”. Burragé, The Story of Robert Browne, 4.
252 Powicke, Robert Browne, 19-20.
observation shared by B.R. White, who perceives Browne’s rereading of this text as a
difference between him and the Presbyterians. It is, however, probably closer to the
truth that his interpretation of Matthew 18 is still in harmony with the Presbyterians,
who also used this text to emphasize the local church. As we observed both in
Cartwright’s lectures and notably in the *Admonition* of Field and Wilcox, the
Presbyterians stressed the authority of the local church to appoint their own ministers.
Even Greenham seems to have shared this view. How close Browne stayed to the
Presbyterian agenda is furthermore illustrated by what follows:

Therefore is the church called the pillar & ground of trueth. 1. Tim. 3. 15. & the
voice of the Vhole people, guided bie the elders and forwardest, is saied to be
the voice of God. And that 149. psalme doth shevue this great honour, Vvhich is
to all the saincts. Therefore the meetinges together of manie churches, also of
euerie Vwhole church, & of the elders therein, is aboue the Apostle, aboue the
Prophet, the Euangelist, the Pastor, the Teacher, & euerie particular Elder. For
the joining & partaking of manie churches together, & of the authoritie Vvhich
manie haue, must needes be greater & more Vvaightie then the authoritie of anie
single person. And this alsoe ment Paul Vvhere he saith. 1 Cor. 2. 22. Wee are
yours, & you are Christes, & Christ is Godes. Soe that the Apostle is inferior to
the church, & the church is inferior to Christ, & Christ cōcerning his manhood
& office in the church, is inferior to God.

Browne’s critique upon the episcopacy and call for local authority is followed by a
recognition of a larger synodic structure, as he did in his catechesis above. Clearer than
in his catechesis, however, he states the supreme authority of these synods having even
greater authority than local churches. However, if this authority also implied the power
to overrule local churches in all matters is unlikely. Taking Browne’s context into
account, he probably understood this authority in terms of counsel and advice, like most
Presbyterian envisioned synodic oversight. His reference to Ephesians 4:11, here, serves
to indicate the difference between his concept of ordained ministry and that of the
episcopacy: biblical offices do not replace the authority of the local church. It moreover
shows that Browne’s priority of the local church does not in any way exclude the
ministerial guidance of elders, but rather includes them, under whose guidance the
congregation together forms the hermeneutic framework for finding the will of God.
Browne refers to Psalm 149, in the English translation of the Genevan Bible (1566), in
which the ‘Congregation of the Saints’ is praised as a means through which God executes
his vengeance and judgment upon nations and kings. This, in his view, contrasted with

See White, *The English Separatist Tradition*, 60-64.
the English episcopal structure in which the single bishop functioned as the embodiment of the will of God and the presence of Christ. If Browne indeed moved away from the Presbyterians it is on this point, that he came to recognize the entire gathered community as the embodiment of Christ’s presence, independent of the sacraments. We would be wrong, however, to interpret Browne’s local ecclesiology as underwriting modern concepts of autonomy, since he views the local gathering interrelated with other churches and recognized their higher authority.

3.5.2. The Problem of Episcopacy

Browne continues his critique on the episcopacy, arguing that the bishops, by having placed themselves above the local churches, have successively also taken the place of Christ.²⁵⁶ Where Christ in the New Testament times did not enforce his apostles upon any congregation, these bishops “force vpō the people euerie Vvhere, & in sundrie places against their vvilles, not onelie ministers vnknowūe [sic], but also such as are knowūe to be blind busserdes, Vvicked fellouves & idol shepherdes.”²⁵⁷ And so, these bishops both replace and surpass Christ, in the exercise of their office. Consequently the episcopal system, which is based upon the illegitimate exaltation and self-enrichment of the bishopry, obscures the rule of Christ and his discipline. In contrast to the episcopal abuses, Browne describes a view of ordained ministry that finds its embedding within the local congregation supported by congregational consent. He poses rhetorically: “Who knouveth not also, but that they vvhich are not duelie receaued & called to guide, & that by due consent & agrement, they are ether Antichristes in the church, or Tyrantes in the common vvelth, because they vsurp in the church or commōvvelth.”²⁵⁸ Browne’s characteristic wording of congregational reception recurs here to define how he understands the congregational recognition and appointment of ministerial office. Interesting is also the phraseology of ‘tyrant’ to compare episcopal ruling, especially since the same wording is also used by Cartwright and the Admonitioners.

After this extensive critique of episcopacy, Browne continues with autobiographical content to explain how his changed views eventually led to a breach with the English church and, eventually, also with the Presbyterian circle of which he was a part. The following excerpt tells us why their paths ultimately separated:

While R. B. thought these thinges in him self he moued the matter diuers times vnto others. Some did gainsay & those of the forvvardest, affirming that the byshops authoritie is tolerable, & he might take license & authoritie of them.

²⁵⁶ Cf. “For Christ hath chosē us, saith the scripture, & not Vve him, Ioh. 15. 16.; & therfore he is the greater thē vs all. And seīg the church can not chosē thebishopes, nor those hirelinges, Vhome the bishopes thurst vppon them, therefore thei compare them selues in degree, but Vvith Christ?” Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 400.
²⁵⁷ Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 400.
²⁵⁸ Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 401.
According to Browne, the breach between him and the Presbyterian Puritans, here referred to as ‘forwardest’, revolves mainly around the differences in attitude toward the ‘unreformed’ English church. The Presbyterians advocated a Reformed government, but were, in the end, willing to ‘tolerate’ present deviations as long as there was true preaching and a pure administration of the Sacraments. This difference in attitude is precisely what motivated his treatise *A reformation without tarying for anie*. Because of their tolerance, the Presbyterians essentially sacrificed the third criterion of their own agenda, namely church discipline, which was so vehemently defended in the *Admonition*. Discipline, as stated there, was regarded as the most important means for the reformation of the church. To convince the Presbyterians of their illegitimate tolerance on the basis of the truthfulness of Word and Sacrament, Browne sought to demonstrate that the absence of sufficient reformation only revealed the falseness of the bishop’s preaching and their administration of the sacraments. For to preach is “to do the Lordes message,” he argues on the basis of Jeremiah 23:22.260 And thus, he concludes:

Therefore except they haue a due message, they can not preach the vword off message. For I sēt them not saieth the Lord in that place, nor comma unded them, therefore they bring no profit vnto this people. Againe except they preach those things first, ffor vvhich first & chiefly they vvere sent namelie vvhat soeuer is to reclame the peopl e, first from some especial vvickednes, wherein they sinne, & so ffrom all other deffaultes, they can not be said to preach the vvorde.261

The bishops lack a legitimate ministry since they refrain from bringing the necessary reformation to the church and therefore lack the required divine charge. Given Browne’s understanding of legitimate ministers as ‘messengers’, send to proclaim God’s message of spiritual regeneration,262 an unreformed church is a testimony of the contrary. For the

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259 Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 401.
262 “For to make a sermon is not to preach the vword of God, no, nor yet to make a true sermon. For the seruant that telleth a true tale hath not done his maisters message, not the arraunt for the vvhich he vvas sent, except he tell & speake that for vvhich his maister sēt him.” Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 402. Browne’s wording bears resemblance to William Tyndale: “So ought every preacher to preach God’s word purely, and neither to add or minish. A
true message has disciplinary effect, and when this fails, there cannot be a divine charge. On top of this, the bishops abuse the obedience of the people to follow ecclesiastical laws contrary to the message of Scripture and disqualify themselves by “mingling the clean & vvretched together.”263 On this point, Browne shows the consequence of the authority of the local congregation above its ministry, and based on Jesus’s call in Matthew 15:14, states that “the people vvere charged by Christ toe lette alone such blind guides, & not to be guided by them.”264 If those in ministry refrain from the exercising discipline and pursuing reformation, then the congregation itself has the duty to take disciplinary measures and separate itself from illegitimate ministers. In this way, Browne explains not only his own future separation from the English church, but also criticizes the indulgency of those Puritans who accept the ordaining authority of the bishops: “But to be authorised of them, to be svvorne, to subscribe, to be ordained & to receaue their licensing, he vttelie misliked & kept hi selfe cleare in those matters.”265

3.5.3. Parishes and the Preaching Ministry
A subsequent development in his journey is Browne’s distancing from the parish system. Due to a lack of positive response for his ideas, he shifts his focus from the institutional parish to the private meeting, summarized in the famous dictum that “the kingdom off God Was not to be begun by vvhole parishes, but rather off the vvorthiest, Were thei neuer so feue.”266 Browne’s detachment from the local parish seems to be more a result of personal disappointment, as also Patrick Collinson concluded,267 than of a formal critique of the parish system as Christopher Hill claimed.268 For Browne continued to work out an ecclesiology that envisioned a federation of local congregations, as advocated among Presbyterians. Nor is there a critique on the parish itself, as long as proper reformation was made. Yet, he concluded that his endeavor for reformation along these federative lines was not picked up by whole parishes at once, but only by small minorities who, in his idea, did have the courage to break free from bondage to the bishops. Another significant motive for Browne’s break away is the neglect of true preaching by preaching ministers within English parishes, where instead of printed homilies were read (see

true messenger must do his message truly, and say neither more nor less than he is commanded.” In “The Obedience of a Christian Man,” 2:245.

263 Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 403.
264 Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 403.
265 Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 404. Browne portrays his own disobedience to the bishops as similar to the disobedience of Jesus to the Pharisees (cf. Lk. 2:46), and Paul’s polemic with the Jews (Acts 13:14; 21:26),
266 Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 404.
267 “Disillusionment for Browne, as for many later ‘Brownists,’ such as the lapsed and excommunicated members of Francis Johnson’s Amsterdam congregation, may have been at the root the disappointment of mutually destructive human relationships, the family at war.” Collinson, “Towards a Broader Understanding of the Early Dissenting Tradition,” 24.
268 Cf. “The attitude towards the parish became one of the dividing lines between separatist and non-separatist.” Hill, Society and Puritanism, 438.
Like most Puritans, as noted in the previous chapter, Browne defended a radical implementation of Protestant sermonizing that championed Romans 10:14, ‘faith comes through hearing’ (fides ex auditu), as a necessary tool of spiritual regeneration.\textsuperscript{269} Browne saw the substance of ordained ministry so much characterized by preaching, that without it, a parish would lack the salvific message of God and the means for adequate reformation. Further on in his biography, Browne writes: “iff he can not minister the vword Vvith praier: Act. 6. 4. he is not meet to be a pastor or vwatchmā ouer the people.”\textsuperscript{270} In short, when parishes acquiesced in their subduction to episcopal oppression, combined with a general neglect of preaching and discipline, Browne could no longer consider them as legitimate churches, since by their disobedience they broke God’s covenant.\textsuperscript{271} It is therefore too short-sighted to conclude that Browne rejected the parish system as such, and was more in line with his argument to say that he withdrew from their unreformed and corrupted status. In other words, Browne’s own argument differs more on strategy, than it does on ecclesiology.

In the succeeding part he reports of his continuing conversations with Robert Harrison about the application and assurance of salvation. It reveals some interesting details about Browne’s ideas about the relationship between special ministry and the general ministry of every member. He writes how every Christian ‘speaking the Word of God’ could win others for Christ.\textsuperscript{272} A statement that leads him to a broader definition of preaching, than confined to the Sunday morning sermon, nor to the ordained minister.\textsuperscript{273} That what makes ‘mere speaking’ into preaching, should not be determined by the location, nor dependent on the person speaking: “Therefore preaching is not tyed to the pulpit, not to degrees, to persons, to the tippet, or surplisse, or cornerd capp, to the priest sleeued cloake, or to the skarlet houne, the attire of bishops, the beadle & tipstaffe and other disguisings.”\textsuperscript{274} In short, not the outward apparel, but the accuracy of the message met by a corresponding reformation of manners, as Browne already noted earlier, makes ‘speaking’ into preaching. Browne’s broader concept of preaching seems to, at least on the face of it, erase the distinction between a special ministry and general ministry. This would however be a premature conclusion, for Browne continues his argument by


\textsuperscript{270} Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 416.

\textsuperscript{271} See Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 406-408, 412.

\textsuperscript{272} Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 410.

\textsuperscript{273} Cf. “preaching is not oneli the publick teaching in the pulpit, but it is rather that duetie of speaking & teaching the trueth, as it ought to be taught & that in what place so euer.” Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 410. John Penry similarly accepted the practice of lay preaching, see his \textit{Three Treatises Concerning Wales}, ed. David Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1960), 83, 38; cf. Hill, \textit{Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England}, 67.

\textsuperscript{274} Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 410.
making a difference in vocation: “Yet is there a difference of preaching, because some are called and receaued to that office and charge, in publique manner, but others are bound onelie as all other christians, to edifie and instruct one an other: and this also is preaching, but not vvith publique charge.”275 The now familiar terminology of sending and receiving to denote the ordained ministry, is here further clarified with the wording ‘public charge’. Hence, the difference between a special ministry and general ministry is by Browne explained as a difference in vocation:

Thus vvas it agreed on that faith cometh bie hearing and hearing bie the vvord preached, and the vvord is preached bie those vvhich are sent, & this sending is both of those vvhich haue publique message and authoritie ouer others, and also of euerie christian, vvhich is called and commaund bie all occasions to edifie others.276

Every Christian is sent to preach and called to edify others, but only ‘some’ have this commission accompanied with a certain communal role and authority. That what separates the ministry of messengers, locally identified with the offices of pastor and teacher, from the larger ministry of all, is their communal role within the covenanted congregation.

In the following section, Browne pronounces his difficulty with the influence of the civil government in ecclesial matters, which he adds up to his earlier critique of the tolerating attitude among Presbyterian Puritans. Most of the points made in A reformation without tarying are repeated. Because the episcopal system was supported by civil law, the church was in fact ruled by the English queen rather than Scripture, and hence, “thei mingle ciuil and church offices.”277 As a result, ministers are turned in instruments of the civil government, serving the state’s interests than Christ’s.278 The mingling between civil and ecclesial offices, has also the effect that civil means of violent enforcement are used, which do not suffice the kingdom of God and discriminates the legacy of the Marian martyrs, in whose footsteps most Puritans claimed to act.279 It is as if Browne tries to show how the Presbyterians’ own toleration contradicts their own ideas of a synodical church and violates their ministerial calling.280 Accepting the supreme governance of Queen Elizabeth is for Browne equal to the displacement of Christ’s rule,
and therefore essentially a covenant breach: “They are vwithout the Lords covenant, &
without his gouernmēt.”281 Basically, Browne uses his own covenant-based ecclesiology
to point out the failure of the English church: because of its unbiblical government and
lack of reformation the English church could no longer be considered a true church of
Christ.

3.5.4. The Report on the Church Covenant

In the last part of his autobiography, Browne describes the process of how he, and his
trusted followers, planted a new church by dedicating themselves anew to God through a
new covenant. Before the actual act of covenanting, he writes that they first confessed
their sins and pledged their obedience to the Lord. Then, a covenantal text was drafted
which was subsequently accepted by mutual consent of all present. Thereafter several
significant doctrinal convictions were formulated and explained to those gathered, so
that everyone might consent thereunto. The content of the covenanting act is by Browne
recalled in the following excerpt:

First therefore thei gaue their consent, to ione them selues to the Lord, in one
covenant & fellovveshipp together, & to keep & seek agreement vnder his lavves
& gouernment: and therefore did vutterlie flee & auoide such like disorders &
vvickedness, as vvas mencioned befo re. Further thei agreed off those vvhich
should teach them, and vvatch for the saluation of their soules, vvhom thei
allowved & did chose as able & meete ffor that charge. For thei had sufficient trial
& testimoniethereoff by that vvhich thei hard & savve by them, & had receaued
of others. So thei praied for their vvatchfulnes & diligence, & promised their
obedience.282

Browne’s account consists roughly of two parts. First, the so-called ‘planting of the
church’: a covenanting with God and one another through a joint submission to God’s
ruling. A pledge that basically makes up the disciplinary framework. The second step,
especially the first ecclesial act of the entire membership, is to appoint its ministers.
Whether this includes also the elders is uncertain. Although Browne leaves the wording
‘ordination’ out of the text, the same vocabulary is used, as he did in his catechesis to
explain the process of election and ordination. It shows, more importantly, how closely
the appointment of the special ministry was tied to the constitutive covenant of the

281 Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 421.
282 Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 422. Browne’s formulation bears a great resemblance to the
church. To consider Browne’s concept of special ministry as non-essential, therefore, oversimplifies Browne’s actual position.  

It is only after these initial stages that Browne mentions the ordering of the running affairs: the schedule of gathering, the practice of discipline, the appointing of future officers, the elements of liturgy, and the admission of new members. Among these affairs they also discussed the prerogative of exhortation and edification, “ether by all men which had the guift, or by those which had a special charge before others.” Earlier Browne already noted his broader concept of preaching, recognizing both the duty of every Christian to proclaim the Word for mutual edification, and those who have a ‘public’ office to preach. As we have seen, Browne differentiates between the gift of preaching and the public office of preaching. What is interesting on this point, is how Browne links up the general form of preaching with the spiritual gift and the official preaching with the covenantal act. Yet both types of preaching are accountable to the church, as they agreed that “anie might protest, appeale, complaine, exhort, dispute, reproue &c.” The recognition of people’s response should not be confused with democratic ideals. Fitting with his wider Puritan context, as Arnold Hunt has shown, Browne considered preaching not as a non-interactive performance, but rather assumed ‘Berean’ response (Acts 17:11), and a continual self-application on the side of the hearers, known as ‘the art of hearing’. Browne’s emphasis on response, moreover, is consistent with the ‘new Reformed arrangement’ sermon-style found in _A Treatise vpon the 23. of Matthewe_. Integrating people’s response in his ecclesiology, Browne admonished every member to share in the responsibility of mutual accountability, even those who were appointed to special ministry. It is fascinating that Browne connects his idea of accountability also with the synodic structure he envisaged, for they jointly agreed to seeking “other churches to haue their help, being better reformed, or to bring them to reformation.” It shows, once again, how Browne never advocated an ecclesiology limited to the local church, nor propagated local autonomy or isolation.

The final pages of Browne’s autobiography describe their final decision to leave England, and their experiences in Middelburg. It is a sketch of persistent friction and how it finally came to a breach. Among reporting the causes of this split, Browne utters

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283 Contra Henry M. Dexter, _The Congregationalism of the Last Three Hundred Years as Seen in its Literature: With Special Reference to Certain Recondite, Neglected, or Disputed Passages_ (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1880), 111.

284 Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 422.

285 Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 422. This form of participation of the laity was already possible in the Refugee Churches (with Marten Micron) in London during the Edwardian years, see De Boer, _The Genevan School of the Prophets_, 244-248. The responsibility of the laity to check sermons is commonly noted among Puritans, see for example Richard Greenham, “A Short Forme of Catechising,” 266.


his disappointment over the fact that his congregation became “estraunuged from the pastor”\(^ {289}\). Rumors, quarrels and doubts, particularly concerning the role of Browne himself, caused the small congregation to drift apart. Most sadly is the role of Robert Harrison, former combatant of Browne, who became the leader of Browne’s opposition. Eventually, Browne was excommunicated and removed from his own home, which apparently was their place of gathering. The last sentences make mention of a new series of troubles, but are cut off by its sudden ending.

### 3.5.5. Conclusion

Browne’s autobiography demonstrates how much biography and theology are intertwined. Faced with the tolerant attitude of the Presbyterian wing, his commitment to further reformation takes a different turn. Whereas the Presbyterians were willing to permit the unreformed state of the English church—as long as right preaching and a pure administration of the sacraments were untampered with—Browne saw it as nothing less than the surrender of church discipline. And moreover, he saw it as a surrender which was in fact a breach in the covenant with God. For Browne, the much desired ‘further reformation’ equaled a return to a new Christocratic covenantal obedience. This concept of the church, as already found in the previous documents, led to Browne’s separation. In order to pursue the further reformation advocated in Puritan circles, he saw it necessary to seek a covenantal renewal with those willing to be obedient to Christ rather than to the civil magistracy. The ‘two-stage interpretation’ of *A True and Short Declaration*, suggested by Champlin Burrage, fails to do justice to the continuity of Browne’s ecclesiology with his Presbyterian context\(^ {290}\). For it has become clear that Browne’s separation should not be interpreted as a total rejection of the Presbyterian agenda, nor of the parochial system itself. But rather as its practical effect; Browne brought the main elements of the Presbyterian pursuit to reality outside the confinements of the Church of England. The ‘turn to the local church’—as observed with Cartwright and the Admonitioners in the previous chapter— is by Browne further developed to a covenant-based ecclesiology in which the gathering of the faithful under the Lordship of Christ is constitutive: Christ is principally present in the local congregation of believers (cf. Mat. 18:17). Consequently, Christ’s ruling presence within the community supersedes the authority of the singular ministry. Therefore Browne saw the bishop’s office as outright challenge to the essential Christocracy that is the church.

\(^{289}\) Browne, “A True and Short Declaration,” 424. It is this part of the document which appears in Bancroft’s refutation of the ideas and practices of the Precisians, as an example of the logical disunity that follows nonconformity. See Richard Bancroft, “Certen slaunderous speeches against the Church of Englynde by the Precisians;” in *Tracts ascribed to Richard Bancroft*, ed. Albert Peel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 88-90. Avis takes Browne’s exclusion from his own church, strangely enough, as proof of his malfunctioning ecclesiology, see Avis, *The Church in the Theology of the Reformers*, 221.

Since it is the gathered community that participates in Christ, they are jointly entrusted with the responsibility to appoint the special ministry.

The priority of the covenantal gathering implies, furthermore, that the necessity to ordain ministers is not a requirement for covenanting with God, but rather a consequence of such covenanting with God. The special ministry is explained by Browne as originating in God’s sending of a public preaching ministry. Though the specific terminology of ordination is absent, the language Browne uses is in line with his concept of ordained ministry in *A Booke which sheweth*. Though, all Christians are called to preach, in the sense of sharing faith and encouraging one another, only some have this calling in an official and communal manner: they are ‘public’ people, whose office is related to their existence as a covenantal people. In this way, Browne’s ‘stripped’ the special ministry from its outward apparel and legitimation, in order to join it to the church covenant. This is also Browne’s main argument against the episcopal office since it is supported by civil law rather than by a covenantal basis. As was also the principal argument behind his pamphlet *A reformation without tarrying*. The differences in the ways of upholding discipline between church and state implied for Browne that church offices were not to be mingled with civil offices or civil affairs. This was precisely the very point of his difficulty with the toleration among the Presbyterians, for their support of the English church signified a tolerance of the state’s interference with church discipline, which was not left to the covenanted congregation, but to singular offices, in particular the bishops, whose office was directly tied to the likings and demands of Queen Elizabeth and her coercive power.

Another characteristic element in Browne’s story concerning his advocacy of the synodical structure, which he, in this document, explicitly attributes with a larger authority than the local community. Although he, as before in *A Booke which sheweth*, uses only few words to explain his position regarding synods, it is evident that he envisioned his covenantal ecclesiology to embody local congregations to function as part of a sort of network. His covenantal ecclesiology is therefore a stranger to sole ideas of local autonomy or independency. Rather, Browne viewed the local covenant as part and substance of the larger covenantal meetings of churches, for mutual support, encouragement and betterment. We can conclude, by now, that Browne’s separation did stem from a disagreement with the Presbyterians, namely over the implications of the necessity of church discipline. Yet it was also the case that their differences appear to largely be one of tactic, rather than theology.291 Certainly with regard to the local church, the role of the ordained minister, and the synodical network, Browne remained indebted to the Presbyterians.

3.6. An Answere to Master Cartwright (1585)

In 1585, about a year after Browne’s Middelburg experiment, another extensive manuscript emerged, generally considered to be written by Robert Browne. The critical edition of Peel and Carlson is the result of a comparison between the handwritten original, kept in the Lambeth Palace Library (MSS 63), and the printed copy published in London in the same year.

The direct occasion for Browne to take up his pen, was his acquisition of the letter written by Thomas Cartwright to Browne’s former colleague, Robert Harrison. In this letter, Cartwright responded to a letter of Harrison, discussing the ecclesial status of the English church. While both Harrison and Cartwright agreed that there were many things amiss, Harrison concluded that because of these errors the English church could no longer be considered a true church of Christ, and faithful believers therefore should not be joined with this church, but should separate. Cartwright, however—evidently seeking to overcome the differences, seeks to facilitate a possible reunion. At the center of their correspondence—crucial to our reading of the Browne’s present document—is the toleration of the so-called ‘dumb ministry’. The latter phrase is a common term, found in many Puritan writings to describe the non-preaching parish priests who were mostly unable to handle Scripture and unfamiliar with the original languages, and had to rely on the reading of printed homilies instead. The reference ‘dumb’ or ‘dumb dogs’—

292 See Lambeth MSS 113: 203-222. It appears in a collection of miscellaneous papers, brought together by former Archbishop Sancroft. Interestingly though, the preface included in the printed edition, is missing in the Lambeth manuscript.

293 See Robert Browne, “An answere to Master Cartwright for Ioining with the English Churches,” in The Writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Browne, 431. Browne is said to have explicitly denied to have anything to do with its printing. Cf. “yet by no means will he confess to be acquainted with the publishing or printing of it.” Thomas Fuller, The Church History of Britain From the Birth of Jesus Christ until the year MDCXLVIII (3 vols.; London: Thomas Tegg & Son, 1837), 3:63; and Dwight C. Smith, “Robert Browne, Independent,” CH 6, no. 4 (1937): 313.


295 “And although I write in good assurance especially in the former parte as touching the rightfull Title of the Churches of Christ to be due to the assemblyes in Englelde, yet rememering (besides the common frailtie of our whole race) special breaches & decayes in my selfe I wil willingly hearkē vnto any (much more vnto you whô the Lord in mercie hath bestowed good greaces vpon) shewing better things. For which cause if further conference be needefull, I must thorough businesse be inforced, to reseve it to conference by word of mouth, sometimes after dinner. And thus with my most humble prayers vnto the Lorde our God for his holy spirite whereby wee may be able to discerne the thinges that differ to our vnoffensiue walking in the sight of all men, euen vnto the daye of the Lorde I bi d you Farewell.” Cartwright, “An Answere vnto a letter of Master Harisons,” 57.

in the sense of being mute, or unable to speak—was chiefly derived from Isaiah 56:10: “Their watchmen are all blinde: they haue no knowledge: they are all dumme dogs: they can not barke.” Puritans used this text to portray the non-preaching priests as dysfunctional ‘watchdogs’ who could not perform their basic task of warning the sheep for the approaching ‘wolfs’ of Roman teachings and superstitions. However, Cartwright denied that the tolerance of dumb ministers was sufficient basis for separation. For the Separatists to do so, made the truthfulness of the church dependent on the presence of a preaching ministry, and thus he writes: “you ascribe more force to it, then it hath.” Somehow Browne got a copy of Cartwright’s letter in his possession, and wrote what would be his last extensive defense of his Separatist position, somewhere in the first months of 1585. Ironically, the same letter became the immediate cause of his arrest that lead to his submission and recantation. The tone of Browne’s response shows a distrustful man who questions Cartwright’s motives to seek reunion with Harrison in Middelburg. With regard to Cartwright’s toleration of the unreformed state of the Church of England—irrespective of the lack of adequate preachers—he seeks to prove the untenability of this position by presenting a fair view of the Separatist cause so that readers are able to make a good comparison. The contents roughly show two parts: first a defense of the obligation of church discipline, and secondly, a defense of the Separatists’ rejection of the English church on the basis of the ‘dumb ministers’.

3.6.1. Doctus and Clericus

Browne opens his epistle with the cynical observation that Cartwright’s representation of Harrison’s position creates an unnecessary tension between the Separatists and the English state. Cartwright makes its look like the Separatists would be opposed to the

Language in English Renaissance Literature: Reading Shakespeare, Donne, and Milton (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012), 168-171. The famous preacher Edward Dering once preached before Queen Elizabeth (February 25th, 1569), saying: “To keep back the ignorant from the Ministerie, whom God hath not called to suche a function, take away your authoritie from the Bishops, let them not at their pleasure make Ministers in their Closset, whom so euer it pleaseth them. To stop the inconuenciences that grow in the Ministerie by other, who say they are learned and can preach, and yet do not, that are as I said dum Dogs, and wil not barcke, bridle at the least their greedy appetites, pul out of their mouthes these poisoned bones that they so greedely gnaw vpon.” Quoted in Blench, Preaching in England, 301; see also W.H. Frere, and C.E. Douglas, eds. Puritan Manifestoes: A Study of the Origin of the Puritan Revolt, eds. (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1907), 57, 110; and Albert Peel, ed. Seconde Parte of a Register (2 vols.; Cambridge University Press, 1915), 2:21.

300 Browne writes that Cartwright’s letter was written at least five or six weeks prior to his acquisition of the letter (Browne, “An answere to Master Cartwright,” 433; cf. Smith, “Robert Browne, Independent,” 313). Burrage mentions that it must have been written before his recantation on 7 October 1585 (see The True Story of Robert Browne, 74).
entire legal system and were in disagreement with the entirety of Christian doctrine. But, as Browne explained in his other writings, it is rather its ‘half-reformed’ status:

Further, whereas the lawe doeth binde vs to come to the church, it doth well, for no man ought to refuse the Church of God, yet if when we come to church, we finde there an vnlawfull minister, and a wicked confusion of all sortes of people, the fault is not nowe in the law but in the Byshoppes which place such ministers, and in their spirituall courtes which are authours of such confusion: for the Lawe commaundeth that the Minister shou ld be Doctus and Clericus, which wordes doe require learning sufficient, and godlinesse meete for a cleargie man: otherwise howe shoulde he be Clericus that is one of the Lordes inheritance.303

With these words, Browne, in fact, reminds Cartwright of the essential points made by the Presbyterian movement. Not the obligatory service per se is the problem, but the unfit ministers that preside over these services and the lack of ‘learning’ (doctus) and ‘godliness’ (clericus) they displayed. Instead of dealing with English law, the blame for these abuses is caused by the bishops who appoint these unfit ministers who lack the sufficient training. Interestingly, certainly with regard to Browne’s educational criticism in his treatise on Matthew 23, he here calls for learning and godliness. It confirms our more nuanced reading of his criticism toward the university trained clergy, which was not directed at learning itself but at its misuse. Fascinating in the excerpt above, moreover, is Browne’s depiction of church ministry as part of the ‘Lord’s inheritance’, with which he expands on the idea of ministry as a divine gift.

Observing the episcopal abuses in the English church, Browne posits the pivotal question whether the English Church, in its present condition, can indeed be considered a Church of Christ. While he admits his ignorance of Harrison’s precise formulation, he assumes that the latter only condemned corrupted churches and only ‘false’ believers, and not every individual parish or believer. A nuance Cartwright did not make, as he justifies every parish within the English church, regardless of these abuses, on the assumption that every parish contained some true believers who confessed their belief in Christ and were thus sanctified by Christ’s Spirit.304 In other words, though the outward church had its defects, true belief still could be found there, and therefore God was still in covenant with the English church. Browne, however, contends the assumption that the invisible could vindicate the visible: “for by faith which is inwarde, and the spirite that is inwarde, hee woulde iustifie an outwarde churche.”305 Browne, in turn, claims that unless

303 Browne, “An answere to Master Cartwright,” 435. For the spiritual courts, see Hill, Society and Puritanism, 299-343 (esp. 331). Interestingly, Hill mentions that these courts—since the Reformation royal courts too—came increasingly under the influence and control of the crown, while the civil courts became more independent.
Scripture is actually reigning by visible obedience, its mere presence says nothing. The pervasiveness of “open and grosse wickednesse” in the English church rather testifies the opposite, and stands in sharp contradiction with Cartwright’s presumption that the Church of England is in covenant with the Spirit by the mere presence of the Word.306

On a deeper level, by vindicating the English church, Cartwright betrayed the crown jewels of his own Presbyterian theology, namely the triplet of preaching, sacraments and discipline—notably defended by the *Admonition* and himself—as visible marks of the true church. Browne writes:

Christ appointeth the Apostles to plant churches throughout the world, he appointeth them not, to talke of and profess the word in their mouthes onely, but he giueth in charge these three things, as being the chiefe marks of a planted Church: namely *preaching the word, ministration of the sacramēts, & reformation of life*, which is the chiefest thing of all to set forth his Church & kingdom: for he commādeth to preach and baptize, & because preaching & baptizing is nothing without amendmēt of life, he addeth these words, teaching thē to obserue & do all things, whatsoeuer I haue comānded you.307

Browne roughly connects his previous idea of ordained ministry in terms of Christ’s gifts to the church that keeps to the reformed marks of a true church: ministers are send to the church, having been charged by Christ, to establish right preaching, a truthful administration of the sacraments and church discipline. It is noteworthy that Browne’s places a stronger emphasis on the last, here referred to as ‘reformation of life’. It shows how elementary he viewed the practical obedience of the congregation in response to the Word preached and the sacraments. Word and sacraments are only means to generate a people ‘separated’ from the world through the lived obedience to the rule of Christ. In other words, where Christ’s Word and sacraments are met by the reformation of lives, there is Christ in covenant with his people. Adhering to Jesus’ Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20, Browne describes the reformation of life as a visible testimony of the covenantal bond with God. And consequently, he understands the absence of such life as a sign of the absence of the covenant.

Subsequently, Browne opposes Cartwright’s claim that the presence of a preaching ministry already validates the entire parish as a true church of God. Not only would it essentially rehabilitate even Roman Catholic parishes, which was an abhorrent idea to every right-minded Protestant, but it would furthermore make the preaching ministry the real constitutive mark of the church. In keeping with Matthew 18:18-20, Browne argues that it is the gathering of believers, who separated themselves from evil, who have received the constitutive power of Christ to be a church, “even to binde men on

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earth, and to loose them on earth, that they may be bound or loosed in heauen.”³⁰⁸ Hence, it is the disciplinary ‘power of the keys’—associated with the act of covenanting—‘that binds’ people to Christ and to each other. In other words, a church is not planted by mere ‘belief’ in Christ, but emphatically by belief that is expressed in obedience to Christ. ‘Separation from evil’ is therefore an essential element of Christ’s church, since it is the visible expression of the ruling presence of Christ: “Indeed one person will not make a church, for the church must needs be a number, but where two or three are gathered in the name of Christ, there is he in the middes of them.”³⁰⁹ Browne’s heavy emphasis on discipline, the third mark of the true church, convinced him of the constitutive role of gathering believers in response to Christ’s calling. His concept of a ‘covenanted church’ is essentially a Christ-disciplined community in which discipline is not the prerequisite of officeholders, but a joint responsibility: “Therefore this doctryne is still agaynst Master Cartwright for neyther the worde in the preachers mouth, nor the Sacraments can make an outwarde Church, except they haue the power of Christ to separate the vnworthye.”³¹⁰ It is clear that Browne tries to avoid any disconnection between the preaching ministry, the sacraments and the joint exercise of discipline. Together they make God’s covenantal presence visible. Paul Seaver, in his study of the Puritan lectureships, unjustly concludes on the basis of this section in Browne’s letter to Cartwright, that the prevalence of discipline over preaching differentiated the Separatists from the Puritans.³¹¹ For it was precisely Browne’s point that preaching and discipline could not be severed, but were two sides of the same coin: true preaching would result in the reformation of life.

According to Browne, Cartwright’s failure to uphold the unity of all three marks, fails to recognize the constitutive character of the Christian church as a disciplined community under Christ. For his neglect entails a toleration of an unbiblical ‘transfer’ of disciplinary authority to “those vile courtes and officers, and Bishoppes set ouer them to be all the Church of God.”³¹² Succinctly, the Presbyterians under Cartwright’s leadership not only neglected the value of discipline, but moreover accepted its usurpation by the so called ecclesial courts. Courts that were headed by bishops and ultimately operated under the authority of the English crown, and importantly, made use of other disciplinary means. We have already encountered the same critique of this ‘mingling’ of ecclesial and civil offices in earlier documents. But now, Browne explicates the differences between civil and ecclesial disciplinary means more precisely. For, instead of money, bribes, fees and civil penalties—as these ecclesial courts were accustomed to—“[t]he Church can deale no further then onely by rebuke, warning and exhortation out of gods worde, and

³¹¹ See Seaver, The Puritan Lectureships, 26-27.
by forsaking & casting of[f] fellowship in grosser sinnes.”313 Civil measures do not suit the rule of Christ, since his rule, as explained in Matthew 18:15-17, demands brotherly correction, repentance and faith. Money and/or imprisonment cannot make recompense for spiritual trespasses. It is clear therefore, infers Browne, that since these ecclesial courts and their bishops have no calling from the local church, nor employ the Biblical means of discipline, they cannot have any authority in or over the church. In short, by disavowing the ecclesial courts, Browne explains Cartwright’s tolerance of the episcopal discipline as a direct disobedience to Christ’s rule.

3.6.2. Dumb Ministry and Donatism

Browne continues in a second section discussing the matter of the ‘dumb ministry’. Cartwright apparently assumed from Harrison’s blatant rejection of parishes with a non-preaching ministry, that Separatists made the legitimacy of the parish depended on the legitimacy of the minister. It has to be said that Cartwright himself, during the Admonition controversy with John Whitgift, also strongly rejected the legitimacy of non-preaching ministers.314 In light of Cartwright’s outspoken nonconformity, as described in the previous chapter, it seems likely that he changed his reformist strategy when faced with ‘Brownist’ Separatists.315 While Browne considers the presence of these fake ministers within the English parishes a problem of the entire church, Cartwright’s line of defensive reasoning fails to understand how Separatists viewed the relation between the covenant, church discipline and ministry: “for we make not the minister, whether dūbe, or not dumbe to be the essence, substance, or life of the outward Church, but the keeping of the covenant by the outwarde discipline and gouernement thereof.”316 For Browne the nature of the church is defined by God’s covenantal relation, and not by the presence of ordained ministry. Thus, not its location (an official parish or not), nor its official ministry is therefore decisive. Hence, the problem with the English church is not merely the quality of its ministry, but on a deeper level it is the illegitimate appointment by bishops that directly challenges Christ’s rule. Cartwright might assume the supremacy of Christ within the Church of England, yet the practices of his church speak against this assumption: “for when the Bishoppes which are greater usurpers are present, then they are heades, and both the dumbe ministers and hireling preachers, may serue well ynough to bee the tayle.”317

314 Cf. Hunt, The Art of Hearing, 31-32, 41. Thomas Cartwright himself once wrote: “As the fire stirred giveth more heat, so the Word, as it were, blown by preaching, flameth more in the hearers, than when it is read.” Quoted in Horton Davies, The Worship of English Puritans (Morgan: Soli Doe Gloria Press, [1948], 1997), 186.
315 Cf. Peter Lake’s analysis of Cartwright’s correspondence with Robert Harrison and Anne Stubbe, see Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church, 77-91.
Browne’s disagreement with Cartwright is not so much over the question whether there are ‘dumb ministers’ within the English church, but rather if their presence affects the truthfulness of the entire church, and in the end—if their presence could be tolerated or not—Browne, arguing mostly on the passage in Matthew 18, states that Christians are obligated not to engage with these ministers, nor to receive the sacraments from their administration, as Cartwright thought possible. Where he sought to substantiate the existence of God’s covenant with the English church by the ‘seals’ of Word and sacraments, Browne questions the validity of its administration. For Cartwright there was no doubt, since, if the inadequacy of the ministry indeed made the sacraments invalid, then the sacraments became dependent on whether or not the minister was a ‘preaching minister’. This objection once again confirmed Browne of Cartwright’s failure to understand the Separatist’s basic position. For it is not a question of qualified ministry or unqualified ministry, but rather of “false professors, and of a false profession, . . . together with their assembles.”

In other words, the whole presence of ‘dumb ministers’ makes it impossible for a congregation to be in covenant with God, as it presumes the toleration of unlawful ministries and the neglect of discipline. And without discipline, a church lacks the required covenantal framework from which the ministry and the sacraments stand. In straightforward sentences, he then concludes, “yet in deede it is true, that they which refuse his discipline and governement, do also refuse Christ him selfe.” A gathering of people only becomes, and remains, a church through the presence of Christ as a ruling King which becomes visible in the upholding of discipline, which is nothing other than obedience to his rule. Christ is there where his message is received in obedience. And where his rule is refused, “all the godly shall withdraw them selues from them, and hold them accursed.”

Considering Browne’s language, it is no surprise to see the association with Donatism impose itself, as we saw earlier in A Treatise vpon on the 23. of Matthewe. Yet again, Browne strongly denies such a charge, now using the argument that he never envisioned a sinless church: “We teach no such doctrine, but if in any Church such grosse sinnes bee incurable, and the Church hath not power to redresse them, or rebelliously refuseth to redresse them, then it ceaseth to be the Church of God, and so remaineth till it repent, & take better order.” Jesse Hoover, in a recent article, correctly disputed the accuracy of Browne’s conception of Donatism, and concludes that “Browne reimagines Donatism as a soteriological heresy—an impossibly perfectionist impulse.”

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319 Cf. “belike he thinketh that the Sacraments may be seuered from discipline, yea and the Church also, and yet be an outwarde and visible Church of God.” Browne, “An answere to Master Cartwright,” 453.
323 Jesse Hoover, “‘They bee Full Donatists’: The Rhetoric of Donatism in Early Separatist Polemics,” RRR 15, no. 2 (2013): 164. In this interesting article, Hoover traces the changing Separatist apologetics from Browne to Henry
Notwithstanding, with regard to the argument itself, it appears that the difference between Browne and Cartwright is not a matter of perfectionism or not, but the importance of discipline as Christ’s mandate to counter disobedience. Where Browne considered church discipline ‘essential’, Cartwright “sayeth that faith in Christ is the essence, being, or life of the church: as for discipline it is but accidental, and therefore the Church of God may have her being and life, and be named the church of God, without discipline.”324 Conversely, Browne contends that Christ alone is the true nature of the church, who rules his church by covenantal obedience. By removing the necessity of discipline, Cartwright consequently displaced Christ from his rule, and is left only with an idol and dead Christ, and thus, an idol and counterfeit church. The tolerance of ‘dumb ministers’ directly opposes the rule of Christ, and robs the English church from its covenantal bond by which Christ establishes his rule.

Browne’s finds this Christological premise in the Christ’s threefold office through which the church is joined into God’s covenant: “Nowe Christ is made as no christ unto vs, except we holde him, and ioyne with him as our annointed King, priest and Prophet.”325 It is a threefold office or nothing. Most important to our study is his subsequent connection with Ephesians 4, specifically verse 8 and 16, stating that all things, including notably the official ministry, originate in Christ’s provision:

So take away the kingdom and governement of Christ, and there can be no ioyning, nor coupling together of the church, no offices nor callings in the Church, yea, no face, or shewe, or rather no parte, signe or token of the church. For these graces do we receive of Christs kingdome or from his imperiall Maiestie.326

It is the same line of thought as in his catechetical A Booke which sheweth; participating in Christs’ threefold office means receiving the Biblical offices of Ephesians 4:11, as confirmation of the covenant. Hence, the acceptance of the ‘dumb ministry’, implies a neglect of discipline and undermines the very covenantal nature of the church.327 Putting Browne’s train of thought in succession: thus far, he argued that the tolerance of non-preaching ministry testifies of the neglect of church discipline, which in its turn

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327 Cf. “Thus it is manifest, that through want of discipline, there is no naturall conjunction of the partes and members of the church together”. Browne, “An answere to Master Cartwright,” 463.
demonstrates the impartial participation in Christ’s threefold office and thereby the absence of covenant.

The covenantal framework that constitutes the church is bound to Christ’s presence in his threefold office and enables the church, as a whole, to exercise discipline. Browne perceives the joint exercise of discipline as a foremost testimony of participation in Christ. The further reformation still needed, exists in a return to this shared responsibility of every Christian: “Every particular christiā is a king & a priest vnto god, a king because he holdeth the scepter of gods word, to iudge the offēders, a priest because in euery place he offreth incense and a pure offring to the name of the Lord.”328 The whole membership shares in the responsibility to keep the covenant, and remedy sin by discipline. It follows, then, that the authority to withstand ‘dumb ministry’ befalls the whole church membership. And so, Browne concludes, the tolerance of non-preaching ministers reveals basically the negligence not only of parish ministry, but of all English Christians, who have disavowed their Christ-given authority to uphold the covenant by tolerating unfit ministers.

3.6.3. Christ and His Messengers

Having explained his covenant-based criticism with respect to the ‘dumb ministry’, Browne again questions Cartwright’s own tolerance of a non-preaching ministry.329 Though these ministers were generally considered ‘unfit’ according to most Puritans, people were still permitted to hear their homilies and receive the sacraments, and therefore did not need to separate from their local parish. Browne, of course, in defense of his own separation, cannot but argue on the basis of their invalidity the legitimacy of parting the English church. To tackle the inconsistency of Cartwright’s leniency, Browne recalls his characteristic portrayal of the special ministry in terms of ‘messenger’: “For if they be not messengers, nor ministers from Christ, then their message and ministerie is not from Christ, but from the deuill.”330 If ministers lack an adequate sending, their ministry has no Christological basis, and can therefore not be trusted. Cartwright’s awkward validation of sacraments administered by unfit ministers tries to bypass this basic Christological continuity between the calling to ministry, the ministerial charge and the exercise of ministry. If a minister’s calling and charge are unlawful, then also “his action and deedes of ministration are vnlawfull and of the devill,” writes Browne.331 A minister either is sent by Christ and therefore legitimate, or there is no ministry at all. Somehow Cartwright was willing to make a functional differentiation between an unlawful minister and his lawful ministry. But, infers Browne, if Christ does work

329 Cf. “A further problem for many puritans was that they found their own arguments being turned against them by radical separatists.” Hunt, The Art of Preaching, 41.
through the ministry of an unlawful minister, it cannot but lead to the validation of the entire ecclesiological structure of the English church:

Whereby also it followeth that Christe doeth sende such dumbe, or blynde reading ministers to take charge of the people: also that for a neede, reading ministers may bee in the Churche in steade of preaching ministers: Further that the byshoppes maye thrust vpon the flocke, what Ministers they lyst, and giue them that authoritie and calling which God can not giue them: Also that the people shall bee counted Gods people and Churche, though they bee vnder the deuilles messengers, and subiect to his guyding.332

Cartwright’s functional toleration of ‘dumb ministers’ carried the false pretense that these ministers acted in the name of Christ. Furthermore, it ignored the aforementioned congregational authority, to “let them alone blinde guides, leaders of the blinde, and haue nothing to doe with their guyding and ministerie.”333 With these terms Browne offers a more precise wording to his concept of ordained ministry. They are messengers send by Christ who are to be heard as “spirituall guides, pastours, watchmen for our soules, and ministers in the church,”334 and moreover, “teachers and guides in Christ.”335 That is to say, Christ as the controlling authority, provides his covenanted people with his ‘covenental agents’ to carry out these specific roles. And consequently, though they may be appointed with consent of the church, it is not the church who determines the role of the ministry. Thus, Cartwright may tolerate ministers who do not preach, yet it is not up to him to decide over the content of ministry: “And so the dumbe minister can haue no office nor calling in the Church, seeing there is no such ministerie, nor parte of ministerie, as to be a reading minister.”336 The ministry Christ sends to his church is a preaching ministry, and consequently, those who lack the competences to meet this ministry, cannot be ‘received’ as such: “therefore the dumbe ministers hauing no ablenesse nor sufficiencie to that calling, are wholly to be reieected.”337 The church, and certainly not its bishops, has been given the authority to ‘invent’ ministerial offices, but only receives these ministries from Christ. Ministry, therefore, cannot be separated from the concept of agency. Interestingly, Browne takes up Cartwright’s own critique in his lectures on Acts (§ 2.3.4.), in which he argued the invention of unbiblical offices.

The last argument Browne brings in against the dumb ministry is based on the difference between church and state. Different from civil structures, where a bad magistrate can in fact be a magistrate, the church only acknowledges ‘godly’ ministers:

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“vngodly men may bee sometymes lawfull officers and magistrates in a common wealth: . . . But in the Church of God, this holdeth not.” 338 With this argument, Browne complements his differentiation between church and state: they have different standards, different structures, different means, and require a different character. It seems that for Browne the substance of ministry is determined by Christ and exists only in relation to Christ. A church may appoint its own minister, but the character of ministry is determined by Christ.339 Hence, if any ministry lacks this character it is not a ministry of Christ, and therefore cannot be called by Christ. Hence every ordination should follow up the commission of Christ.

In final pages, Browne challenges Cartwright’s position by a Biblical exploration drawing a strong similarity between first-century Judaism and present ceremonies within the English church, and between the Scribes and the dumb ministers, who are ignorant of the true and teach untrue doctrine, and should therefore not be heard but avoided and separated from.340 Accordingly, repeating most of his previous arguments, Browne maintains that it is not lawful to join with these preachers in the communion of the sacraments,341 for this is to join in with a false ministry and thereby join in with sin. Though bishops are responsible for ordaining these unfit ministers, parishioners are accomplices by “receiving them for their ministers, and taking them to be called to that office by the Church, as Master Cartwright teacheth vs, and yeelding them selues to be their flocke and charge.”342 Separation is the only viable option to withstand these preachers, and prevent further corruption. In this way Browne explains his rejection of the English church and its ministry as a result of ensuring discipline and keeping the covenant with Christ.

3.6.4. Conclusion
Browne’s correspondence with Presbyterian ringleader Thomas Cartwright brings many previous themes together and provides a clearer picture of where his Separatist movement precisely diverges from the Presbyterian Puritans. It is significant that the critical protest of A Treatise of reformation without tarying, specifically against the mingling of ecclesial and civil offices, is carried through in this letter, particularly with respect to the differences in disciplinary means. Church discipline should reflect the rule of Christ as a means of maintaining and restoring the covenantal relationship according to Christ’s ‘decree’ in Matthew 18. A ruling that excludes all disciplinary measures which violate the personal conscience. On the other hand, Browne’s critical position regarding

church and state relations receive some nuance when considering his positive reception of the legal obligation to attend parish services. Though obviously at odds with his earlier plea for freedom of conscience, it only further stresses his proximity to the Presbyterian idea of the role of the Christian state as a defender of outward religion. Following Genevan ecclesiology, Presbyterians generally considered a Christian government to be responsible for ensuring the wellbeing of the church in order for the people to have a place and occasion to hear the gospel. 343 Considered from this angle, it furthermore explains why Browne so heavily rages against his fellow nonconformists: it is not the state, but rather the church which is failing. Browne’s primary problem is with the ecclesiastical government and policy, and all clergymen who tolerated the present situation. 344 For Cartwright, in his letter to Harrison, suddenly emphasized the unconditional nature of the covenant of grace based upon the presence of Word and sacrament. 345 Ecclesiastical toleration, therefore, essentially implied a deliberate sacrificing of discipline as the third mark of the true Reformed Church. As also observed in his autobiography, the ultimate breach between Cartwright’s Presbyterianism and Browne’s Separatist movement is the evaluation of church discipline within the Church of England. While they both agreed that discipline was failing, they differed on its implications. To Browne the English church could no longer be recognized as a true church of Christ, whereas Cartwright was still willing to recognize the Church of England as such by the mere presence of Word and sacraments, the ‘rudiments of discipline’ and some godly believers. 346 Browne’s elevation of church discipline to an articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiae flows directly from his covenantal ecclesiology. For, as noted before, he considered mutual obedience as the human part of the church covenant and as the visible expression of submission to Christ’s rule. Discipline is an explicit qualification of the church as a ‘gathering of the worthy’. Toleration of disobedience, therefore, essentially signifies a breach in the covenantal constitution of the church. It has to be emphasized that Browne rejects any form of perfectionism, as if discipline could keep the church ‘sinless’. The purpose of the church covenant was not moral perfection, but providing the reconciling means of practical sanctification, the ‘reformation of life’ (cf. Mat. 18:5-20). 347

343 See Avis, The Church in the Theology of the Reformers, 147-150; and Ha, English Presbyterianism, 13-20.
345 “Againe, the Lorde is in couenaunt with that people to whome he giueth the seales of his coueuant; this he doth to our assemblies in England, therefore they are the Lordes confederates.” Cartwright, “An Answere vnto a letter of Master Harisons,” 52; see also Brachlow, The Communion of the Saints, 47-48.
346 See further Lake, Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church, esp. 83-86. Lake indicates how Cartwright, faced with Browne’s Separatist movement, feels compelled to ‘ignore’ the corrupt institutional framework of the English church and defend its legitimacy on the basis of the incipient traces of further reformation.
347 See Collinson, “Towards a Broader Understanding of the Early Dissenting Tradition,” 9. Though Collinson rightly corrected Perry Miller’s assessment of the church covenant in this regard, his own evaluation based on William Ames, also seems to miss the pratical point of sanctification.
Browne’s adoption of congregational discipline as a constitutive ecclesial act also has consequences for his theology of ordained ministry. For it is not the singular officer, but rather first the joint congregation which shares in the threefold presence of Christ. This means that discipline is a shared and communal responsibility and not a privilege of a bishop or an ecclesiastical court. Furthermore, the importance of discipline urges Browne not to tolerate the presence of the ‘dumb ministry’. Since ordained ministry originates distinctively from Christ’s rule as a ‘preaching’ ministry (Eph. 4:11), neither the church nor its clergy are free to ‘invent’ their own ministries. It is essentially the argument that gave rise to the Presbyterian movement in the early 1570’s. The character of ministry is determined by Christ as he sends these messengers to preach the Word of God. Though a local church has the authority to appoint Christ-called messengers, it has no authority to change the character of ministry. Accordingly, Browne views the character of ordained ministry predetermined by Christ: a ‘pre-given’. Clergy, whose ministry did not conform to Christ’s rule, were therefore not to be received as such. Thus whereas Browne denied the ordained ministry to be constitutive of a church, he nonetheless understood the ordained ministry as an important gift of God to the gathered church in covenant with him. Ordained ministers are the local version of divine ‘messengers’, send to provide a local community with Biblical teaching and guidance. To Browne, therefore, Cartwright’s toleration of non-preaching ministers—though he too denied its truthfulness—conflicts with the covenantal constitution of the church.

The difference between Browne and Cartwright basically boils down to the latter having minimalized his ecclesiological criteria to justify his tolerance of the Church of England faced with the drastic consequences of Separatism. In sum, the entire letter can almost be summarized into two lines: a church without discipline is no church, and a non-preaching ministry is no ministry. On the basis of these arguments, which were essentially already present within the Presbyterian agenda, Browne left the Church of England.

3.7. Browne’s Ecclesiology in Context
As announced at the beginning, this chapter is aimed at a theological reconstruction of Robert Browne’s theology of ordained ministry with the intention to answer the questions which were left unanswered after our reading of Browne’s historiography in Chapter 1 (§ 1.4.6). First the question pertaining to Browne’s theological position within the ecclesiological landscape of late Elizabethan England will be addressed. And,

348 Arnold Hunt identifies the reading/preaching distinction as a “dividing line” between Puritans and Conformists, see The Art of Hearing, 38.
secondly, the question regarding Browne’s own concept of ordained ministry—specifically concerning the relationship between the divine origin and the congregational embedding—will be perused. In the following paragraphs these questions will be answered against background of our results in Chapter 2.

1. Browne clearly presented his call for further reformation in continuity with the initial call of the Presbyterians. The Church of England was to be restored along the lines of the apostolic church as warranted by Scripture. The urgency with which, for example, Field and Wilcox reinforced the Admonition is in Browne’s literature grown into a full Christological necessity: disavowing the pattern set by the Scriptures would directly undermine Christ’s rule. Browne, moreover, merely repeats Cartwright’s lectures when stating that episcopal titles have no precedent in Scripture and are thus ‘unlawful’. Though the repetitive ‘then and now’ formulation, found in the Admonition, is not literally reiterated by Browne, his argument does emphatically posit the current situation of the English church in contrast with the Biblical standard. This becomes most vivid in his consideration of ministerial education in A Treatise vpon on the 23. of Matthewe, where he uses Matthew 23:1-3 to argue for a more biblically orientated form of preaching. His employment of Old Testament stories, and certain returning New Testament references (Mat.18:17; Rom. 10:14 and Eph. 4:11) are all likewise used in this direct way, as Biblical prescriptions. While to a huge extent analogous to the Presbyterian rhetoric found in Chapter 2, Browne takes it to the next level by turning it into an argument for separation. Suddenly, obedience, as the visible sign of the rule of Christ, became a condition for ecclesiological truthfulness. In the end, it was the urgent need for obedience to Scripture rather than church hierarchy and royal supremacy, that reshaped Browne’s convictions and motivated him to break with the English church.

2. The ‘turn to the local church’—found with Cartwright, the Admonitioners and Greenham—is by Browne developed into a full covenantal ecclesiology. Browne’s coupling of covenantal theology with his re-reading of Matthew 18:17 generated its theological rationale: Christ was principally present in the local covenanted community of believers. As rightly observed by Steven Paas, covenantal theology successively

350 Brachlow notes this as an important difference between the Christian humanist (or moderate Calvinist) line of tradition, which reasoned ecclesiology to be a matter of indifference and therefore a result of historical conditions. The (Presbyterian) Puritans maintained that in the New Testament Christ had clearly described a single pattern for the church (see his The Communion of the Saints, 22-23; cf. White, The English Separatist Tradition, 53).

351 See also Brachlow, The Communion of the Saints, 36: “Because assurance of true faith within this tradition depended so heavily upon visible fidelity to every commandment of Christ, the more advanced puritans like Cartwright, were convinced—at least, in the matter of the urgency of their opposition to episcopacy—that failure to obey the biblical mandates regarding the church would lead to eternal damnation.”

352 See also White, The English Separatist Tradition, 54-55. Though White incorrectly conceives Browne’s conditional interpretation of the church covenant as an innovation, this bilateral or mutualist understanding of the covenant was already present within the Reformed tradition as we observed in § 3.4.1. Cf. Brachlow, The Communion of the Saints, esp. 21-41.

determines Browne’s entire ecclesiology. The Presbyterian recognition of the importance of congregational consent with the appointment of ministers, is by Browne theologically grounded within the church covenant. This theological appropriation of ‘covenant’, a real ‘identity marker’ of reformed theology, puts Browne distinctively within the Reformed camp. Though most covenantal theologians understood the covenant of grace generally as an invisible spiritual reality, Browne saw the gathering of the worthy as its visible reality, whereby he brought covenantal theology to its ecclesiological conclusions. In Browne’s argument the church appears essentially as the visible expression of the covenant of grace. Hence, the local covenanted church is a gathering of the elect who have responded to God’s sovereign call to salvation. It is this full priority for the intermediary or priestly role of the gathered believers over the ordained ministry, or the presence of Word and sacraments, that sets Browne apart as a pioneer of congregational ecclesiology and differentiates him from Cambridge Presbyterians. However, this willingness should not be identified with a sort of ‘Arminianism’ avant la lettre, as he explained people’s willingness explicitly as an expression of divine election (viz. ‘gathering of the worthy’). Though Calvin himself did not make this implication, it was considered ‘orthodoxy’ among many Puritans, who viewed repentance as a practical syllogism for the assurance of faith. In this way, Browne’s idea of voluntary religion corresponds with that of his radical Puritan contemporaries, who provided him with the language to explain the need for the formation of a covenanted church with a lawful ministry as grounded in the doctrine of divine election. The covenant was for Browne thus not only a testimonial about the state of God’s salvation, but also describes the way God pulls and keeps people into his realm of grace. The church is a Christocracy, which unlike Elizabeth’s worldly dominion, could not be upheld by violent enforcement but only by willing obedience and repentance. Christ’s church can therefore only be ‘planted’ through the gathering of willing people, who have disciplined themselves under his covenantal reign. Christ’s covenantal reign is expressively linked with his threefold office, by which God fulfills his promise to provide his people with the salvific means in order to live a godly life. As Priest, Prophet and King, Christ enables this gathering to function as his church in the world. First to enjoy the merits of salvation by his priesthood, second

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355 See Willem Balke, Omgang met de Reformatoren (Kampen: Groot Goudriaan, 1992), 119-129. Balke unjustly describes congregational ecclesiology as a kind of ‘religious individualism’ in which the freedom of the individual receives priority over the needs of the ecclesial community.
356 See Kendall, Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649, 19, 24-28, 29-38, 209-210. Kendall traced the ‘seed of voluntarism’ —as he calls it—to the soteriology of Theodore Beza who made a distinction between faith and assurance and tended to put repentance before faith in the ordo salutis. In this way, faith could not be simply assumed on the basis of outward confession, but needed to be ‘proved’ by a visible alteration of life, or sanctification.
357 See Collinson, The Religion of the Protestants, 242-252; and Kendall, Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649, 44-47.
to have his Word by his prophethood, and third to receive his authority to exercise discipline under his Kingship.

Browne’s embrace of a synodic structure furthermore affirms his close affiliation with Cambridge Presbyterianism. He never envisioned his covenantal ecclesiology to justify local independence and autonomy. Rather he considered the local covenanted church part of a broader network of covenanted churches who also ‘covenant’d’ together in larger meetings with higher authority, such as prophesyings and synods. Though further clarification of the role and position of synods—for example, whether their authority is binding or merely advisory—in relation to the local church is scarce, it is clear that he envisioned a synodic structure of only three levels. First the local gathering of believers, then the regional prophesyings, primarily for educational and ministerial purposes, and thirdly, the synod as a sort of ‘larger conference’ where governmental issues were discussed. Francis Bremer suggests that Browne’s idea of prophesyings represents some kind of lay empowerment, yet this is evidently not what Browne intended. Like most Presbyterians, he saw these gatherings primarily as an instrument to improve ministerial skills and strengthen further reformation. It is this covenantal basis that differentiates synodal authority from the tyrannical authority of bishops. It remains difficult, however, to assess how Browne’s recognition of synods relates to the church beyond the local church, or universal church, which is central in Presbyterian ecclesiology. Nevertheless, in a real sense, we can conclude with regard to Browne’s ecclesiology the very same thing Polly Ha writes about the Presbyterians: “Despite the dominant narrative of an almost exclusive tendency toward congregational autonomy, there was flexibility within nonconformist ecclesiology that allowed for ecclesiastical liberty and authority beyond the particular congregation.”

3. In spite of his reputation in secondary literature—particularly Peter Lake’s often repeated caricature—our analysis has sufficiently attested that an “anticlerical revolt,” or even an abolishment of ordained ministry, is far from Browne’s actual argument. Every depiction in which Browne is advocating some form of ‘ecclesial democracy’ or ‘lay control’ (such as David Zaret, Peter Kaufman, Michael Winship have argued), fails to read Browne’s literature in its proper context. Rather, the importance...
of ordained ministry has shown to be a major theme in his thinking.\textsuperscript{364} Nor was Browne’s concept of covenant intended as a replacement of ordained ministry as Peter Iver Kaufman maintains.\textsuperscript{365} Like the Presbyterians, both moderate and extreme, Browne’s ‘anticlericalism’ was exclusively directed against a certain kind of clergy, the episcopal hierarchy, as well as non-preaching ministry.\textsuperscript{366} Ministers were not be priests but \textit{preachers}. His profound affiliation and attachment to the Presbyterians is furthermore shown by his similar plea for ministerial equality, congregational election by consent, and the need for a local embedding of a preaching ministry. The exposition of ministerial ‘tyranny’ was already part of the Calvin’s teaching (cf. ‘a puny man risen from the dust,’ § 2.3.2.), and notably featured in Cartwright’s lectures at Cambridge. Ordained ministry was not to be constrained upon a local church, but was to emerge from a local covenanted community as a gift of God to sustain this covenantal bond. Browne’s own development, as observed above, is the covenantal framing—what we therefore have termed ‘covenantal agents’—of the corporate approach to church and ordained ministry as earlier witnessed by Bucer, Calvin and the Presbyterians. To Browne, only God’s covenental engagement with a local gathering of believers could explain and sustain the intelligibility of ordained ministry in terms of God’s provision. In this way, to use the words of Stephen Chavura, Browne “wanted to avoid both tyranny from above and tyranny from below.”\textsuperscript{367}

The covenantal embedding of ordained ministry by no means prevents Browne from thinking highly of the role of ordained ministers describing them as ‘messenger of Christ,’ by whom Christ himself speaks to his church. This terminology provided Browne with a Biblical image to ground the ministry in God’s covenental dealings with his people throughout salvation history. And second, it serves to underline the Christological rootedness of the local ministry, not unlike Bucer and Calvin (§ 2.3.1. and § 2.3.2.), to denote the direct line between God’s calling of the church and the ordained ministry.\textsuperscript{368} Most significant is Browne’s adoption of the reformed tradition of contrasting the episcopal ministerial hierarchy and its associated titles, with the five-fold ministerial pattern of Ephesians 4:11. Based upon God’s promise in this text, Browne understood parish ministers as local messengers authorized (‘charged’) by Christ to bring the

\textsuperscript{364} Stephen Brachlow therefore rightly corrected his mentor B.R. White in this regard, see Brachlow, \textit{The Communion of the Saints}, 175; cf. White, \textit{The English Separatist Tradition}, 61.

\textsuperscript{365} \textit{Contra} Kaufman, \textit{Thinking of the Laity in Late Tudor England}, 149. Though Michael Watts rightfully notes the covenantal act behind the establishment of ordained ministry (see his \textit{The Dissenters} [3 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978-2015], 1:30), it is not so much a separate ‘horizontal’ covenant as he suggests, but rather the first act of the covenanted congregation as a consequence of being covenanted with God.

\textsuperscript{366} Cf. Peter Lake’s depiction of the position of moderate Puritans, see \textit{Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church}, 287.

\textsuperscript{367} Chavura, \textit{Tudor Protestant Political Thought}, 209.

\textsuperscript{368} Cf. “There is a straight line from the church as an aid to ministry as instrument. Where ministers are instruments in the service of the Lord, they fulfil a specific function in the church.” Van der Borgh, \textit{Theology of Ministry}, 55.
message of Scripture. Ministerial authority, though firmly embedded within the covenantal relations, still maintains its Christological dependency. It is the same Christological charge that motivated Browne above all to call every preaching minister not to ‘tarry’ any longer for the state or its associated bishops.

Browne’s reception of Ephesians 4:11 generally seems to follow the Genevan format. He too added, without further explication, the eldership to the listed ministries. The elders function as a local ecclesial government in support of the two main pastoral offices, the pastor and teacher. Different from Calvin and Cartwright, who explained the teacher more in an academic sense as those entrusted with training pastors, Browne considered ‘pastor and teacher’ as two actual local offices working side by side through whose presence a local church participates visibly in Christ’s office of prophet. Their appointment follows the Presbyterian pattern of election by congregational consent followed by ordination by laying on of hands by the elders. It is significant that further detail about how the rite of ordination was to be exercised is absent in Browne’s writings. He merely assumed the common practice of laying on of hands, supplemented with the same explicit warning against sacerdotal implications, found for example in Calvin (§ 2.3.2.). Browne’s usage of the terminology of the inward and outward calling runs parallel to the divine charge and the congregational recognition thereof. It remains rather vague which offices Browne envisioned to be subjected to ordination. Though other local offices are named (elders, deacons and widows), a good case could be made that only the pastor and teacher needed to be ordained, since Browne emphatically considers only these two offices as ‘messengers’ called for preaching, teaching, and the administration of the Lord’s Supper. This would also correspond with Calvin, who held a similar position. Yet, a definite answer cannot be given. His critique of university training should also be viewed from this perspective, consistent with Richard Greenham’s emphasis on practical divinity (§ 2.3.6.). Mastery of logic and rhetorical skills are not sufficient proof of the calling to ordained ministry, but practical divinity which serves the spiritual formation of parishioners is paramount. With this emphasis on practical sermonizing, Browne shows himself to be fully in line with the Puritan pursuit, and the Cambridge Presbyterians in particular, who therefore adhered to Ramist methodology in which doctrine and ethics could be combined more easily. The centrality of preaching in

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369 See Van der Borght, *Theology of Ministry*, 63-64.
370 *Contra Zaret, The Heavenly Contract*, 116. He unjustly claims that the congregational participation in the election of ordained ministry is a distinctive element of the Separatists.
371 See Van der Borght, *Theology of Ministry*, 77, 100-107, 358. Van der Borght observes the ambiguity surrounding Calvin’s appreciation of ordination, whether or not to be a sacrament. Though Calvin recognized ordination as a true sign of spiritual grace, he also wanted to keep the ministry far away from the sacerdotal priesthood and devoid of any superiority due to special ministerial privileges.
372 *Contra Zaret, The Heavenly Contract*, 109-110. He misreads Browne’s criticism of preaching as sole proof of the lawfulness of the English church, for a general relativization of preaching.
373 Cf. Van der Borght, *Theology of Ministry*, esp. 77 n81.
Puritan literature should be understood against the background of the state church. Elizabethan Puritanism always remained a minority movement and was devoid of official power, and those who did separate—as did Robert Browne—remained a persecuted and scattered minority. In other words, unlike the continental reformation, preaching was arguably the only significant means to revive the established church and its parishioners. Consequently, those ministers who failed to bring the message for which they were sent, were considered lapdogs of the state.

There are, on the other hand, remarkable differences as well between Browne and his Presbyterian context. Especially Browne’s re-interpretation of Ephesians 4:11 catches the eye. Within the standard Reformed interpretation a distinction was made between temporal (apostles, prophets, and evangelists) and permanent offices (pastors and teachers). Browne seems to have differentiated between supra-local and local offices. Apostles, prophets and evangelists had their office within the larger meetings—possibly ‘prophesying’ and synods—and pastors and teachers primarily within the local gathering. In line with the minimal explanation of synods and prophesying, not much is said about his ideas concerning the offices of apostle, prophet and evangelist and if he indeed considered the first three offices as permanent. Browne directs most attention toward these local offices. White’s assessment, however, that their ministerial charge was limited to the local congregation is incorrect. While ordained ministry could not exist apart from a local covenanted church, Browne did not necessarily limit their role to the local church. Not in the least since they were very much expected to participate in the prophesying and synods. Another point of difference is that Browne connects the legitimacy of a minister’s office and the administration of his office much closer than the Presbyterians were willing to do. The threat of Donatism that ‘loomed large’ over the Presbyterians, as we said in the previous chapter, seems to have become reality in Browne’s concept of ordained ministry. In short, the basics of Browne’s theology of ordained ministry are largely compatible with the Presbyterian tradition. The most significant development is the covenantal ‘framing’ of ordained ministry. In order to avoid episcopal hierarchy and the enforcement of ministers, Browne grounds ordained ministry upon the covenantal relation between God and the local gathering of believers.

4. The call for church discipline, once so vehemently brought forward by the Admonitioners, has become in Browne’s literature a full motion of distrust toward the Church of England. His emphasis on discipline as part and parcel of the truthfulness of the church is a direct derivative of his covenantal ecclesiology. Like the Presbyterians, he considered discipline, together with preaching, as the most urgent means of sustaining

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374 Cf. Hunt, Art of Hearing, 4, 12, 400. Hunt even notes that in spite of previous thinking oral transmission even superseded printing in terms of its popularity, its ability to reach the illiterate and its scope for active audience participation and the rapid dissemination of the preacher’s message. Only from the 1620’s this distinction slowly began to diminish and printed sermons gained a higher appreciation.

375 See White, The English Separatist Tradition, 63.
godly living. Not to achieve perfectionism—for Browne never expected a perfect holiness—but as a remedy against ‘chronic diseases’ or public sins that would break the covenant. Discipline did not belong first to the authority of the singular bishop, nor ecclesial courts, nor even the local presbytery, but to the gathered congregation which shares in the threefold presence of Christ. The church jointly received the authority (‘the power of the keys’) to exercise discipline as Browne finds explained in Matthew 18. The church thus exercises and participates in Christ’s kingship when keeping discipline. In other words, discipline is not ‘only’ a mark of the true church for Browne, the very act of covenanting that constitutes the church itself is a disciplinary act. This quotation clarifies most clearly why Browne so vehemently criticized the Presbyterians, for they formally subscribed to the soteriological urgency of church discipline, as we observed in the Admonition, but de facto surrendered its exercise to the bishops and their courts, thereby betraying the covenantal reign of Christ. Understanding Browne’s high appreciation of church discipline should not be explained by easy identifications with democracy or lay control, as noted above, but by his theological concept of the church as a covenanted congregation under Christ’s rule. His covenantal theology was no expression of individual authority, but of personal responsibility (over against coercion) and communal participation (over against permissiveness).

5. Predominantly on the basis of his view of church and state relations, Browne himself earned his infamous legacy in secondary literature. In multiple introductory works in the sixteenth-century Reformations, he is pictured a fearless and violent character with downright anarchist and Anabaptist ideas (§ 1.2.). In similar fashion, though certainly more appreciative, early twentieth-century scholars considered him an ecclesiastical democrat channeling lay initiative. Recent scholars, such as Peter Kaufman and Stephen Chavura, have celebrated Browne as a representative of a kind of proto-republicanism, who with his congregational ecclesiology inspired “the rise of republican and democratic politics.” From this present study a rather nuanced picture emerged. Browne’s cry for further reformation did not entail a complete upheaval of civil society by replacing monarchy with a republican democracy, but a reformation of the church by a return to the Biblical pattern of ecclesiology, as was urged by many reformists of his day. If there is indeed a ‘democratic strain’ in Browne’s ecclesiology, he barely diverges from his Presbyterian contemporaries, as Stephen Brachlow rightly concluded in 1988. In this regard Browne’s call for reformation was as challenging toward the

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377 See Dexter, The Congregationalism of the Last Three Hundred Years, esp. 106; and Calvin Augustine Pater, Karlstadt as the Father of the Baptist Movement: The Emergence of Lay Protestantism (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 253.
379 Brachlow, The Communion of the Saints, 175, 270.
state as the *Admonition* of 1572 was received. It has been evidenced that Browne’s proposal does stand out due to its advanced argument for a more independent role of the church within civil society. His sharp differentiation between civil and ecclesial affairs, evidenced by his rather narrow conception of church discipline—in which ecclesial exclusion had no bearing upon meetings outside the church—differentiates his argument from Presbyterians. How ‘conservative’ Browne’s position remained nonetheless, can be best illustrated by his somewhat ambivalent acceptance of the legal obligation to attend parish services. It fits with his general recognition of the civil magistracy’s responsibility to encourage and safeguard outward Christian religion, as long as they kept a distance toward the internal ecclesiastical affairs. It is in essence the same close cooperation of minister and magistrate advocated by Calvin’s Geneva (§ 2.3.2.). Another point that pleads for a more nuanced interpretation of Browne’s viewpoint regarding church and state relations, was his full compliance with the English conviction of the ‘doctrine of obedience’, which demanded obedience of every Christian to their God-given rulers, and non-resistant disobedience in case of ungodly laws and government. Browne fully acknowledged Elizabeth’s rule as ‘highest under God’ within the commonwealth, and never called for violent resistance or rebellion and fully accepted the consequences of persecution.

### 3.8. Systematic Contributions and Challenges

As described in Chapter 1, the purpose of this research is to bring the historical analysis of Robert Browne’s literature to its systematic relevance by retrieving his concept of ordained ministry as a contribution to the contemporary discussion pertaining ministerial office within congregational ecclesiology (see § 1.1.). In this paragraph Browne’s contributions and challenges to a theology of ordained ministry are specifically formulated, in order to direct further study in in Chapter 4, and make a useful assessment of Browne’s theology of ordained ministry.

1. Central to Browne’s ecclesiology is the conviction that a local church exists in the world as a distinct community by way of a twofold covenant: the divine promise and provision of salvation through Jesus Christ and a human act of obedience to share a common life under the Lordship of Christ. Accordingly, a church derives its very identity from this covenant act. Browne’s church is therefore no democracy, but firmly a Christocracy. Christ is present through the local covenanted community who willfully participate in, and submit to, his rule. The covenant is subsequently also the basis for Browne’s theology of ordained ministry, which he underlines by using the terminology of ‘messenger’ instead of ‘priest’. It emphasizes that ministry is more a matter of embassy or agency, to be ‘agents’ of the church covenant. It is only after the constitutive act of covenanting that the ordained ministry appears as a visible fulfillment of Christ’s covenantal promise of providing messengers according to Ephesians 4:11. Though a
more detailed and responsible account of this text would be appropriate, Browne clearly understands this text as an theological indicative that the ordained ministry should be viewed as a visible instrument of Christocracy. This covenantal approach is a proper way to identify the continuity between local ministry and God’s sending of messengers throughout salvation history. Browne also applies his covenantal framework to the differences between church and state. Accordingly, they formed two different covenants with different purposes, different responsibilities, different structures of government, and importantly, different means of discipline. Hence, ministers are not accountable to civil society, but only to the church. While this covenantal approach can perhaps be helpful to explain the theological distinctiveness of ministerial office, there is also the risk of an overly dismissive attitude toward society. Browne seems to be more concerned with the purity of the church than its role of a priestly people in the world, possibly compromising the church’s mission in the world. To retrieve Browne’s covenantal idea for the contemporary church, we need to discover the missiological significance of a covenantal perspective.

2. Since the ordained ministry finds its roots within the covenantal bond of Christ as part of the church’s inheritance, it is an expression of the convergence between the divine charge and congregational recognition. Browne often speaks of this process in terms of ‘sending and reception’, which are used parallel with the common language ‘inward and outward calling’. ‘Reception’ additionally emphasizes that a congregation never creates its ministers but receives them as a covenantal gift along the lines of Christ’s distribution in Ephesians 4:7-11. A local church may test and appoint a local minister, but it never determines its given task. To Browne the character of ordained ministry is predetermined or, more adequately, ‘pre-given’ by Christ. Ordained ministry is a specific and visible way by which the covenanted church participates in Christ’s office of prophethood. For it is through the explanation and application of Scripture that Christ’s rule is exercised and that people are invited to participate in his covenantal rule. Though ministerial authority has its roots in God’s authority and is a calling upon a particular person, it is the local congregation which is entrusted with the testing of God’s particular calling upon the specific candidate. It is worth mentioning that Browne only refers to this ‘divine side’ of the ordained ministry in relationship to church hierarchy and the state’s intervention in ecclesial affairs. This means that an ordained minister’s message is always subject to scrutiny by the congregation. And, since ordained ministry is covenantal by nature, the congregation itself has the responsibility to dispose ministers who are unqualified or refrain from their covenantal responsibilities. Browne’s covenantal approach, therefore, makes a promising account of connecting ministerial authority and accountability. A caveat is however appropriate on this point. Though Browne did not demand perfectionism for the church to be ‘church’, he did reject a minister’s ministry, including his administration of the sacraments, when their ministry did not conform to
Scripture. Consequently, ‘Donatism’ hangs as a dark cloud over Browne’s concept of ordained ministry. It is unclear how he can escape this ‘heresy’.

3. The Christological charge and the congregational recognition are, moreover, associated with the rite of ordination. Browne describes ordination as the public and visible act representing divine sending and congregational reception. The elders, who perform the ‘laying on of hands’, function as representatives of the congregation’s consent. Browne explicitly denies ordination to entail sacerdotal implications by the invocation of the Spirit or some special gifting that sets the ‘clergy’ apart from the ‘laity’. Rather, ordination signifies a covenantal order, or re-ordering; it is through ordination that the congregation ‘receives’ somebody to serve the ‘public’ ministry of preaching and the administration of the sacraments. Understanding ordination as a covenantal ‘event’ may provide a middle way between sacerdotal clericalism and functionalistic professionalism. It is unfortunate that Browne himself writes little about the actual event itself.

4. Browne develops his theology of ministry in keeping with the Genevan model, linked to an absolutist manner of biblical interpretation. By taking Ephesians 4:11 as his basis for true ministry, he aims to contrast his Biblical warranted view of ministry with the episcopal structures and its titles. For the same reason he substitutes the singular officer with the twofold binary ministries of pastor and teacher. They ‘govern’ his church above all by Word and sacraments. In their tasks they are supported by the elders, and in practical tasks by deacons and widows. Yet, these offices are not associated with Word and sacraments, but with practical affairs and prayer. It remains unclear whether these offices also required ordination. Finally, Browne’s alternate reading of the listed ministries in Ephesians 4:11 draws attention. While most reformers labelled apostles, prophets and evangelists as ‘temporal’—belonging to the apostolic age—Browne’s explanation suggests the possibility of a continuance of these offices in connection with the larger meetings, such as prophesyings and synods. How he envisioned these ministries in relation to the local ministries is uncertain. Finally, it remains vague how these offices relate to the spiritual gifts distributed to the whole congregation.

3.9. Conclusions
In this chapter we have sought to read Browne’s literature within the context of Cambridge Puritanism, especially those of Presbyterian conviction, in order to assess his position within the sixteenth-century world and answer the historical questions formulated in Chapter 1 (§ 1.5.6.).

First, this chapter has shown how Browne’s writings fits neatly within the broad Protestant theological and ecclesiological ‘take over’ in Western-Europe which subsequently reshaped the relations between church and state, between church and
ordained ministry, and between clergy and laity.380 Herewith, Browne has become one of the many voices of his day calling for a further reformation of the English church. This study has observed a large degree of consistency between Browne and the Presbyterian movement surrounding Cartwright. It was Cambridge Presbyterianism that proved to be the premier seedbed for Browne’s Separatist ideas. As noted earlier, even anti-Puritan author Richard Bancroft recognized their affiliation, casting them in the same category of ‘Precisionists’.381 Browne continued the same zeal for further reformation of the Elizabethan church. Therefore, we should rather “see the egg as if he did not know it was going to become a bird,” to use a C.S. Lewis phrase,382 and approach Browne against the background of the more radical wing of Puritans emerging in the 1570’s, as argued by B.R. White and Stephen Brachlow.383 Though some have associated Browne’s convictions with early revolutionary Anabaptist thought due to his supposed anti-clericalism and his criticism of the so-called corpus Christianum,384 this study has shown that even his more subversive ideas are largely consistent with Presbyterian Puritanism. Though Browne obviously stretched their argument,385 certainly with regard to the implications of church discipline and unfit ministry, he stayed within the theological framework of Puritan Reformed theology: seeking the abolition of ministerial hierarchy, a preaching ministry for every parish, ordination by congregational election, local governance by lay eldership, a synodic ecclesiastical structure, and the cooperative relationship between church and state in a godly society.386 It is true that, like every other spokesman who urged for a purer

381 “Because of the mencioninge of Precisians in the treatises followinge: It is to be observed that their diverse varieenge vppon one ground, that is, the Admonitions or libels cast abroade in the Parliament tyme 1571 hath divided them amongst them selves into two sortes. Some doe follow T.C. or rather in deede runne before hym, and yet they are more tolerable. Other some doe followe Browne, who are most detestable and licentious Libertynes. I knowe that Browne in his first Booke hath manye fonde assertations, and a greate many mo in his other two of later edition. Howbeit in the matt er questioned for the present estate and government of the Churche, both the sortes doe ioyne against vs almost in one manner. For the same faultes that the one fyndeth therin, the other dooth also charge vs withal.” Richard Bancroft, “A Generall Table of the Treatises Followinge,” in Tracts ascribed to Richard Bancroft, 18.
382 Lewis, English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, 5.
383 See White, The English Separatist Tradition, 33; and Brachlow, The Communion of the Saints, esp. 271: “In short, the ecclesiastical ideals of left-wing puritans and separatists were very close indeed, a fact which many radical puritans were unwilling to admit but most separatists and confirmists readily recognized.” Cf. Chavura, Tudor Protestant Political Thought, 206-214.
386 Other signature beliefs of Anabaptism, such as believer’s baptism, the rejection of oath-taking, the general rejection of violence, or Christians taking up civil offices, found prominently in the Schleitheim Confession, or Brüderliche
church and the restoration of discipline, Browne received the ‘Anabaptist epithet’ from his antagonists. Yet, it has to be born in mind, that even Presbyterian icon Thomas Cartwright was called an ‘Anabaptist’ by Richard Bancroft. When assessing Browne’s literature we must not be forget that Cartwright’s lectures upon Acts, and its subsequent dispersion by the first Admonition of Field and Wilcox, already created such a climate that Collinson speaks of as a “puritan church within the Church.” Their Presbyterian convictions caught Cartwright and his followers between conformism and separatism, and obviously contributed to the ambivalent position Presbyterians had within the late sixteenth century.

Second, this chapter has established that the lines between Cartwright’s Presbyterian ecclesiology and Browne’s ‘congregationalism’ were not so sharply defined. While Polly Ha admits the difficulty to specify the differences, she mostly seems to locate them on the authority of synods and the visible church. Our analysis of Browne’s literature indicates that a more nuanced conclusion must be drawn with regard to the Elizabethan era. Certainly in the years 1570-1580’s the lines were blurry. The combination of congregational liberty and synodal authority, which became so characteristic for Presbyterian polity, can also be found in Browne’s covenantal ecclesiology. Moreover, he never advocated local autonomy nor propagated independency, but conceded to the higher authority of a gathering of many covenanted church together. Hence, congregational government and synods were not mutually exclusive. Despite some obvious differences, Peel’s conclusion that Browne “announced an entirely different programme” than Cartwright’s Genevan style reformation, must be rejected. Rather, Browne’s polemic with Cartwright should be viewed from the angle of a “family at war,” as Collinson once put it. For the rise of Browne’s Separatism pushed the critical Presbyterians back into the arms of the English church, now forced to pronounce their continued loyalty. Browne’s Separatist twist to the Presbyterian ‘turn

389 See Avis, The Church in the Theology of the Reformers, 46-47.
390 See Ha, English Presbyterianism, 70, 73, 78.
391 Cf. Ha, English Presbyterianism, 49, 56.
392 Albert Peel in the introduction of Tracts ascribed to Richard Bancroft, xv.
394 See Lake, Moderate Puritanism and the Elizabethan Church, 85-86; and Ha, English Presbyterianism, 30. They both discern a development toward a more conformist attitude in Cartwright’s later career. For a more elaborate
to the local church’ revealed the uncontrolled elements within their own ecclesiology, particularly concerning the necessity of local discipline. The only viable option was to retreat and use the ambivalent position regarding church discipline, already present in Calvin’s Institutes. Therefore, with regard to the first question, we can conclude that Browne’s closely followed the Presbyterian ecclesiological pattern of further reformation, but emphatically distinguished himself with his strategy.

Third, this chapter has shown that the consequences of Browne’s affiliation with the Presbyterian movement also appear notably with regard to his views on the distribution of ministerial authority. In line with the traditional Reformed interpretation of Ephesians 4:11, he tried to work out a theology of ordained ministry that sought to keep the middle between the sacerdotal priesthood and anticlerical evaporation, by formulating a theology of ordained ministry embedded within and supported by the local church. Browne’s theological development was the covenantal framing of the Presbyterian ‘turn to the local church’, which depicts ministerial ordination in terms of Christ’s sending and congregational reception. In this way ordained ministry appears as the visible expression of God’s covenantal care to his people. Browne’s covenantal framing allows him to uphold the shared authority and responsibility in church’s life and discipline, while recognizing also the distinct distribution of ministerial authority in the form of God’s messengers. In this way, the authority of ordained ministry is both locally embedded and divinely originated. Associations with democracy, lay control, and the abolition of ordained ministry, have thus shown to be quite exaggerated and to depict erroneous representations of Browne’s theology of ministry. Rather, the ordained ministry is a visible testimony to Christ’s rule by Word and sacraments. Generally, we can conclude therefore, that rigid historical distinctions between ‘Presbyterians’ and ‘Separatists’ run the risk of making a misrepresentation of the complex character of radical Puritanism as well as overstating the ecclesiological differences.


395 Calvin both rejected discipline as part of the essence of the church (only postulating the preaching of the Word and the Sacraments to be essential), and also defended that “it is certain that there is no Church where lying and falsehood have usurped the ascendancy.” Calvin, Inst. IV, 2, 1; cf. Christopher Hill, “Occasional Conformity,” in Reformation Conformity and Dissent: Essays in Honour of Geoffrey Nuttall, ed. R. Buick Knox (London: Epworth Press, 1977), 200.

396 Cf. Thompson, “Nonconformists and Polity,” 93. He writes that, before the English Civil War, it is not helpful to think along the fixed denominational identities when studying English Puritan literature, but rather “to think in terms of a spectrum of belief and practice from Presbyterians via Separatists of various hues to the General Baptists.”
PART II

A RETRIEVAL OF ROBERT BROWNE’S CONCEPT OF ORDAINED MINISTRY
4.1. Introduction

The aim of this study is to retrieve Robert Browne’s theology of ordained ministry with the intention of renewing contemporary debate. For that reason, Chapter 1 explored both the dubious history of interpretation regarding Browne’s ecclesiological position, as well as the main points of criticism toward ordained ministry that makes it controversial today. The subsequent chapters, Chapters 2 and 3, presented an in-depth study of Browne’s particular take on ordained ministry amidst the ecclesiastical controversy in sixteenth-century England. We traced the basic convictions that motivated him to part from the Church of England and to develop a covenantal ecclesiology to explain a church planted by Christ’s gathering of the faithful. And moreover, we observed how his theology of ministry sprung from the same pursuit that earlier motivated a generation of Presbyterian Puritans before him. Namely, the establishment of a learned preaching ministry appointed with consent of the people in every local community. To determine Browne’s systematic relevance for our time, however, the present chapter will turn to the contemporary situation by way of a further discussion of our established criteria, specifically by means of the work of Stanley Hauerwas and Kevin Vanhoozer. As explained in Chapter 1, these two scholars have been chosen—, not only for their prominence in systematic theology, but also since both of them have directly engaged themselves with the crisis of ministerial theology in a post-Christendom context, within which they—like Browne did earlier—propose a new ‘turn to the local church’ together with clear call for the reformation of the ordained ministry to its ‘given’ purpose.

As we have seen—and we explored settings that were much different from our present day—the ministerial controversy of Browne’s century was not so much concentrated on a dissatisfaction with the existence of ordained ministry as such, but rather with questions concerning episcopal hierarchy, the bishop’s prerogative to ordain parish ministry, and the lack of suitable preaching ministers. Though eventually his search made him firmly critical of the *corpus Christianum*, Browne’s own pursuit displays how much he himself was born and bred within a Christendom context. For his plea represents not so much a total rejection, but rather an assumption of a Christian society under a Christian ruler within the commonwealth. This is not only the case in as much as he builds his own argument as entirely based on the self-evident authority of Scripture—presumed as a common source for both church and civil government—but moreover, since his own ideal is still a Christian society where civil government and the church have their distinctive, yet cooperative and complementary, responsibilities. By
separating from the Church of England he basically aimed to restore a pure church with a local preaching ministry, unhindered by the determinative civil structures of his time, such as royal supremacy and its associated hierarchic ministerial structures. In short, Browne’s criticism was directed to the improper exceedance of these well-defined responsibilities. Accordingly, his appeal for voluntary commitment stemmed from his belief that faith was born in the human conscience and could not be imposed on people. Similarly, his anticlericalism did not entail a complete ‘abolition of the laity’, but only sought to establish an accountable levelling of ministerial offices and its covenantal embedding in a local church.

Having said all this, it has come into view that some major points of controversy behind our established criteria in Chapter 1 (§ 1.6.4.), were not yet subject of discussion in Browne’s literature. First of all, his recognition of an ordained ministry in distinction from every Christian’s ministry is today considered an obstacle to the church’s priestly mission in the world. By contrast, Browne’s separation from the imposed ecclesiastical structures was not at all motivated by mission, but rather by restoring discipline and (moral) purity. Consequently, his idea of voluntary membership served to foster personal discipline and commitment. Second, notwithstanding his sharp criticism toward episcopal power, Browne’s entire argument is based on a traditional framework of instituted authority, in which ministerial authority has a self-evident and undisputed place in society alongside civil authority. The question remains, then, what this means for a society in which institutionalized authority has become suspect. And third, Browne’s relatively uncritical acceptance of the ordination practice—be it exempted from a sacerdotal flavor—still does not disposes itself from the present fear of clericalism. For why should only this ministry be ordained? And does ordination not affect the interdependent character of the community? Behind this question lies the Donatist tension between ordained office and morality. To be brief, in order to retrieve Browne in our contemporary context, we need to purposefully asses how his sixteenth-century arguments can benefit today’s discussion.

In the following sections, we will seek further directions in the works of Hauerwas and Vanhoozer, who have both extensively worked out a theology in conversation with the challenges of today. First, in § 4.2., it will be argued that the gift of ordained ministry is not an obstacle to the priestly mission of the church, but can be a vehicle that rather sustains this mission. Accordingly, it is precisely the church’s missional vocation that necessitates the presence of a distinctive ministry. Then, in § 4.3., the question of ministerial authority is discussed, in which the argument is made that the church is to rediscover the value of embodied authority as an essential condition to live as a faithful and peaceful community under God. Rather than self-sufficient and unapproachable, ministerial authority is exemplified by communal participation and accountability. Next, in § 4.4., the consequences of the respective ideas of Hauerwas and
Vanhoozer concerning the character of ordination will be evaluated in order to better understand the dilemma of ‘being’ and ‘doing’. In this section their respective proposals will diverge the most. According to Hauerwas, ordination entails a sacramental call for the development of moral character, while Vanhoozer understands character in terms of drama, and ordination as a functional ‘setting apart’. Finally, the outcome of this chapter is discussed in paragraph § 4.5., in which the contributions of Hauerwas and Vanhoozer are summarized in a set of ‘directions’ that will guide the retrieval of Robert Browne’s theology of ministry in our present day.

4.2. The Problem of a Distinctive Ministry
Central in the Free Church opposition against ordained ministry is the argument of losing sight of the ‘priestly ministry’ of the whole church. As we have seen, James McClendon associates the recognition of a distinct ordained ministry with the remainders of Christendom in which ministry was made the sole prerogative of separated officeholders (§ 1.6.1.). A development which deprived the church of shared ministry to live as a priestly community of witnesses in the world. Miroslav Volf, therefore, only recognizes a general calling to ministry distributed by the Spirit at the moment of initiation (§ 1.6.3.). Thus to the extent that there can be an ordained ministry, it is only in the sense of the particular ‘charisma of leadership’. But even for Volf, every member is a minister, and every member represents Christ. This critical attitude toward a distinctive ministry by ordination is an expression of McClendon’s and Volf’s theological priority for the church as community. In order for us to retrieve Browne’s idea of ordained ministry as a distinct Christological gift (Eph. 4:11), we need to answer the question of how can the ordained ministry be retrieved, and then as well accommodated, within today’s missional situation? As we shall see, Hauerwas and Vanhoozer argue that it is precisely the passing of Christendom, or ‘Constantinianism,’ that once again presents the church with the opportunity to regain the missional purpose of ordained ministry in light of the priestly mission of the church.

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4.2.1. Stanley Hauerwas: Ministering the Witnessing Community

Hauerwas’s most explicit expose on ordained ministry is not uncoincidentally found in his famous review of Constantinianism entitled *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (1989), written together with Duke-colleague William Willimon. It has become widely known for its outspoken rejection of America’s embrace of civil religion and the consumerist ethos within church life. To counter the tides Hauerwas urges churches to recover its true nature being ‘a colony of resident aliens’. It is worthwhile to realize, especially in view of the purpose of this study, that the immediate cause of this book was the perceived ministerial crisis. Hauerwas understood this crisis as a direct result of a diminishing Christian culture, which, by its previous domestication of the gospel, used to provide church and ministry with its significance. But, Hauerwas states, “[t]he church is not to be judged by how useful we are as a ‘supportive institution’ and our clergy as members of a ‘helping profession.’ The church has its own reason for being, hid within its own mandate and not found within the world. We are not chartered by the Emperor.”

To show how Hauerwas derives the significance of ordained ministry from the nature of the church itself, I will first explain the ‘ecclesial turn’ within his theology to clarify his position.

The problem with Constantinianism, writes Hauerwas elsewhere, is that if the church is unable “to preserve the holy from the world, and thus be enabled to mediated the holy to the world, this church is in fact in imminent danger of being engulfed by the world.” Without its distinct identity the church dissolves in the ‘world’ as it loses its missionary purpose or ‘witness’. Following John Howard Yoder’s ‘political’ reading of Scripture, he envisions a church ‘free’ from its cultural captivity to the world as it finds its governing tradition in the particular story of Jesus. It is this story that constitutes the church as ‘colony’. Only as distinct colony the church can be a “social alternative that the world cannot on its own terms know.”

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2 “We believe that the designations of the church as a colony and Christians as resident aliens are not too strong for the modern American church—indeed, we believe it is the nature of the church, at any time and in any situation, to be a colony.” Stanley Hauerwas, and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 12. Though the entirety of the book has been written together with Willimon, I shall only refer to Hauerwas in the text above, since it is his thought that is of concern in this study. In the footnotes, both authors will be mentioned.


6 Cf. “Surprisingly, Yoder’s account of the church fit almost exactly the kind of community I was beginning to think was required by an ethics of virtue.” Stanley Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), xxiv. See also his autobiographical book *Hannah’s Child: A Theologian’s Memoirs* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2010), 116-119.

Aliens is intimately connected with his work in theological ethics. Earlier he retrieved the ethical importance of character as the bridge between the life of Christ and the formation of moral life. To be Christian is to develop a Christlike character. The ethics of character made Hauerwas aware of the social dimension that moral development requires: “The kind of character we have is therefore relative to the kind of community from which we inherit our primary symbols and practices.” Christian life requires practical training and formation within a community that lives by the story of Jesus. Accordingly, Hauerwas’s character-ethics shifts the moral focus from ‘what should I do’ (as in situational/command-ethics) to ‘how should we be’, parallel to the doctrinal idea of sanctification. It reveals Hauerwas’s basic postliberal approach to theology, in which truth claims (propositions) receive their significance (‘intelligibility’) from its coherence with a larger pattern of performances: “The task of Christian ethics is to help keep the grammar of the language of faith pure so that we may claim not only to speak the truth but also to embody that truth in our lives.” Typical for Hauerwas’s way of reasoning, as a result, is the question that is found in various formulations in his literature: ‘what kind of community is presupposed by Christian convictions that makes believing them intelligible?’ In his autobiography he explains this ecclesial turn: “I discovered that the church might make a difference because I thought you needed a community that spoke the language called Christian if Christians, as I would put it much later, were to perform the faith.” This is also the reason why Hauerwas in Resident Aliens would only address the question of ordained ministry within a broader discussion of the practices of the

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9 See George A. Lindbeck, The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, [1984], 2009), 45-55, 114-120. This ‘Wittgensteinian’ perception of faith as a ‘language game’ and doctrine as ‘grammar’ is characteristic for postliberal theology, also known as the ‘Yale School’. It refers to a group of former Yale School professors, among whom Robert Calhoun, Hans Frei, George Lindbeck, and Brevard Childs (see Ronald T. Michener, Postliberal Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed [London: Bloomsbury, 2013], esp. 2-4; and George Hunsinger, Conversational Theology: Essays on Ecumenical, Postliberal, and Political Themes with Special Reference to Karl Barth [T&T Clark Theology; London: Bloomsbury, 2015], esp. 111-128). Besides postliberalism, Alasdair MacIntyre’s concept of tradition provided Hauerwas with the philosophical language to justify his position regarding the intimate relationship between morality and community: “What I am, therefore, is in key part what I inherit, a specific past that is present to some degree in my present. I find myself part of a history and that is generally to say, whether I like it or not, whether I recognize it or not, one of the bearers of a tradition.” Alasdair MacIntyre, After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory, third edition (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, [1981], 2007), 221.

10 Hauerwas, Character and the Christian Life, 233.

11 This line of reasoning shows Hauerwas’s affinity with Alasdair MacIntyre. See for example A Short History of Ethics: A History of Moral Philosophy from the Homeric Age to the Twentieth Century (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), 32: “Thus a necessary step forward in specifying what is good is to specify the kind of common life necessary for the good to be realized.”

12 Hauerwas, Hannah’s Child, 87. He writes that his slow disavowal of the universal scope of theology and ethics, advocated particularly by the brothers Niebuhr, did have “sectarian implications I had not anticipated” (Hauerwas, Peacable Kingdom, xxiv). Though his theological battle with the brothers Niebuhr’s theological legacy would continue throughout Hauerwas’s career, his final settlement came with Gifford Lectures in 2000, published as With the Grain of the Universe: The Church’s Witness and Natural Theology (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2001).
church. Thus, our question ‘why does the church need an ordained ministry’ should be reformulated into ‘what kind of community presupposes the presence of ordained ministry?’

But what kind of community is the church? Convinced that a Christian community cannot choose, but needs to ‘learn,’ what it is to be Christian, Hauerwas argues that Christian faith cannot be understood separately from the local community of disciples. That is where Christians actually gather to discern what it means live their faith. The local church is where real ‘witnessing’ happens. Of course, Hauerwas is very careful in making his ecclesiology another attempt to rule the world, as is the spirit of Christendom. Rather, he considers the local community to be a remedy against illusions of power and control: “Only at the local level is the church able to engage in the discernment necessary to be prophetic.” There the peaceful practices of the eucharist, baptism and discipline (cf. Mat. 18:15-20) are visibly celebrated and applied. Emphasizing the concreteness of the local church leads him to deny the predominance of any concept of an invisible or mystical church: “There is no ideal church, no invisible church, no mystically existing universal church more real than the concrete church with parking lots and potluck dinners.” A funny sentence, that also calls for some explanation considering his general emphasis on the church as a community of Word and sacraments. The curious ‘profanity’ of American-style parking lots and potluck dinners serves Hauerwas’s argument to indicate the far-reaching ‘ordinariness’ in which Christ’s church can be found. Only through participation in such a local church, the concrete and tangible community of Christ, the truth about Christ’s Lordship is made known and intelligible. This is what makes the church a missional colony in the world, to pick up Hauerwas’s repeated plea in Resident Aliens, “the world needs the church

13 “one cannot discuss pastors and what they do until one has first discussed the church, which needs these creatures called pastors. Any attempt to discuss the qualities of a ‘good’ pastor or the significance of being a pastor before one discusses the church is a waste of time.” Hauerwas and Willimon, Resident Aliens, 112-113.
14 See Hauerwas, A Community of Character, 41.
16 Hauerwas, War and the American Difference, 157. Cf. “Yet this is exactly what I am suggesting we should not do. I am in fact challenging the very idea that Christian social ethics is primarily an attempt to make the world more peaceably or just. Put starkly, the first social ethical task of the church is to be the church—the servant community. Such a claim may well sound self-serving until we remember that what makes the church the church is its faithful manifestation of the peaceable kingdom in the world. As such the church does not have a social ethic; the church is a social ethic.” The Peaceable Kingdom, 99.
17 Cf. “But the Spirit does what the Trinity does in a particular way by incorporating the particular, that is, the particular present in the gathering of the community, in baptism, and Eucharist, through which those gathered are made participants in the life of the Trinity.” Stanley Hauerwas, The Work of Theology (Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans, 2015), 42; also The Peaceable Kingdom, 106-111; War and the American Difference, 179-180.
18 Hauerwas, The Peaceable Kingdom, 107.
19 See Hauerwas, A Community of Character, 53-71; and The Peaceable Kingdom, 54-63.
because, without the church, the world does not know who it is.”20 Samuel Wells regrets Hauerwas’ use of ‘colony’ to denote the church as it suggests a ‘separate space’.21 This is, as he also observes, most certainly not what Hauerwas intends. For Hauerwas the church is ‘mission’22 not by withdrawal from society, nor by seeking approval, but to be faithful to particularity and peculiarity of the gospel.23 It is precisely the missionary nature of the local church that also constitutes its catholicity. Following Yoder, Hauerwas upholds catholicity as the local practice of reconciliation (cf. Matt. 18:15-20) through which the unity found in Christ is witnessed everywhere in the world.24 This is why Hauerwas thinks ‘witness’ defines the heart of ecclesiology: witness is what the church is and does in order to embody the story of Jesus: “Christianity is unintelligible without witnesses, that is, without people whose practices exhibit their committed assent to a particular way of structuring the whole.”25 ‘Witness’ is what lies beneath his often quoted punchline: ‘the church does not have a social ethic, the church is a social ethic.’26 The identification of the church with a social ethic is a direct reference to the formative character of Jesus as the Autobasileia (‘Kingdom in Person’),27 whose life story is a social ethic: “From this perspective the church is the organized form of Jesus’ story.”28

Having explained what ‘kind’ of community the church is called to be, it becomes clear why Hauerwas thinks the church needs ordained ministers. Not to provide comfort and sustenance in service of people’s citizenship in society, but to help the church live its particular story notably in the face of other coercive ‘stories’ such as nationalism, consumerism, and individualism.29 Hauerwas’s understanding the church in terms of ‘witness’ is particularly important for our questions surrounding the ordained ministry. For if the church exists for the purpose of witness, and not for control and worldly

20 Hauerwas and Willimon, Resident Aliens, 94; see other variations in Hauerwas, The Peaceable Kingdom, 100; Christian Existence Today, 102; and The Work of Theology, 124, 138.

21 See Wells, Transforming Fate into Destiny, 115.

22 Hauerwas, War and the American Difference, 167.

23 See Hauerwas and Willimon, Resident Aliens, 30-48, 93.

24 See Hauerwas, War and the American Difference, 131, 179-182. Hauerwas therefore also expresses his difficulty with the term ‘universal church’ as it depends more on philosophical notions, than on the concrete reality of the church present in various places and among different people: “The church is mission because it is catholic. The catholic character of the church means it is in mission.” (180).

25 Hauerwas, With the Grain of the Universe, 214. For Hauerwas’s use of the term ‘witness’, see Baan, The Necessity of Witness, esp. 11-52; also his “Stanley Hauerwas and the Necessity of Witness: A Research Report,” ZDT 29, no. 2 (2013): 34-49. Baan claims that ‘witness’ is the basic and leading idea in Hauerwas’s entire literature. He defines Hauerwas’s concept of witness as ‘participation in God’s self-revelation’, which is predominantly done by exemplary living which is turned by the Spirit into divine witness. An authority which stems from their expertise with the gospel having transformed their lives. It is especially significant that while Hauerwas derives his idea of witness from Barth, Baan also notes that Hauerwas regrets Barth’s neglect of the local church as constitutive of Christian witness. There is no truthful account of the Christian faith than by witness.

26 See for example in Hauerwas, A Community of Character, 109; and The Peaceable Kingdom, 99.

27 Hauerwas, A Community of Character, 44-46.

28 Hauerwas, A Community of Character, 50.

29 Hauerwas and Willimon, Resident Aliens, 115.
dominion, it suddenly turns out that a different kind of ordained ministry is required than previously appeared in the era of Christendom to date. An ordained ministry, which is not defined by its support of society, but by its contribution to the church as a witnessing community. It follows that ordained ministry should not be fashioned as an agent of modernity, nor as some kind of religious social worker, but as a ministry mandated by the Christian story to serve the church as witnessing colony.\textsuperscript{30} Otherwise stated, it is the distinctiveness of the church that shapes the distinctiveness of the ordained ministry: “Ministry is the vocation of all Christians, a communal undertaking. Pastors discover their particular ministerial vocation only as pastors discover the ministry of all Christians.”\textsuperscript{31} To Hauerwas the post-Christendom context does not render ordained ministry irrelevant, but should rather be taken as an opportunity to redefine its existence in light of the missional vocation of the whole church. He therefore repeatedly expresses his dislike over the tendency in academic institutions and seminaries to produce clergy who are more conversant in all aspects of modern American culture and congregational adaptation, than they are able to train people in the formative story of Jesus now all Christian axioms in society are falling away:\textsuperscript{32}

If Christendom is still alive and well, then the primary task of the pastor is to help us with our aches and pains (using the latest self-help therapies, of course) to challenge us to use our innate talents and abilities. But if we live as colony of resident aliens within a hostile environment, which, in the most subtle but deadly of ways, corrupts and co-opt us as Christians, then the pastor is called to help us gather the resources we need to be: the colony of God’s righteousness.\textsuperscript{33}

Because the church is forced to once again redefine its existence in terms of witness, it needs people who sustain the church as a place of training and character formation.

\textsuperscript{30} See Hauerwas and Willimon, \textit{Resident Aliens}, 136. Hauerwas points to Friedrich Schleiermacher as example of the turn among nineteenth-century Protestants, who understood dogmatics only in ethical terms, as a way of serving wider society. “Since the state needs religion, theology is justified for the training of clergy who are thus seen as servants of the state. The theology that is so justified is now the name of a cluster of disciplines (scripture, church history, dogmatics, and practical theology) that are understood to be descriptive in character. Accordingly, theology is no longer understood to be practical knowledge necessary for the acquisition of wisdom, but a ‘science’ for the training of semipublic officials.” Stanley Hauerwas, “How ‘Christian Ethics’ Came to Be,” in \textit{The Hauerwas Reader}, 47.

\textsuperscript{31} Hauerwas and Willimon, \textit{Resident Aliens}, 118.

\textsuperscript{32} Hauerwas and Willimon, \textit{Resident Aliens}, 39, 58-59, 115-120, 167. See also Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, “Ministry as More than a Helping Profession,” \textit{Christian Century} 106, no. 9 (1989): 282-284. It is worth mentioning that Hauerwas almost repeats this critique in his recent book: “In the world in which we find ourselves, a world in which the church has lost the ability to shape the lives of lives of people who identify as Christian, it is had to be critical of those in the ministry who seek to build their churches around what people think they need rather than what the gospel tells us we should want … If what you know no longer matters, the ministry cannot help to be another ‘helping profession’ whose task is to attract people to church because of the appealing personality of the minister and the friendliness of the congregation.” Hauerwas, \textit{The Work of Theology}, 105-106.

\textsuperscript{33} Hauerwas and Willimon, \textit{Resident Aliens}, 139-140.
Witness requires the concrete ‘skills’, such as hope, peace, trust, and forgiveness, to embody the alternative polity of Jesus. Ordained ministers help the church to gather the resources through the ‘practices’ of Word, sacraments, and discipline. In this way, ministers show how the catholicity of the church—the practice of reconciliation—connects different communities. It is practices that enable Christians to understand what it means to be Christian in a secular world as they characterize the church as a distinct social ethic. Since this is the way Christian communities ‘learn’ the story so that they are able ‘to speak Christian’. Important for us is Hauerwas’s reference to Ephesians 4:11 precisely within this context. According to Hauerwas, Ephesians 4:11 ‘explains’ why, such as for example happens in the book of Acts, ‘the church’ has told its story primarily by way its leaders:

Sure, the church is ordinary people called saints. Yet from the first, these ordinary people depended heavily on other ordinary people to keep raising right questions, to keep telling the story, to keep speaking the truth in love. So the church could elsewhere speak of these leaders as true gifts of God for the building up and survival of the church (Ephesians 4).

Though only briefly mentioned, Ephesians 4:11 functions to counter current misconceptions regarding ordained ministry. Ministers are God’s ‘gift’ in the shape of people, who are charged with the task of enabling the church to function as a distinctive colony, whose successfulness should not be measured on the basis of how well they are liked by society or even their congregation: “The problem is compounded because our church lives in a buyer’s market. The customer is king.” Since Resident Aliens, Hauerwas further developed his theology of ordained ministry in a ‘high church’ direction (see further § 4.4.1.). For example, in a more recent essay included in War and the American Difference (2011), he expresses his appreciation for the parish-system in England: “I believe the work of parish ministry is crucial for sustaining the visibility of

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34 See Hauerwas, A Community of Character, 89-110; and The Peaceable Kingdom, 22, 29-30, 43, 94-95, 125.
35 Cf. Stanley Hauerwas, “Chastened by Baptists,” Re&E 112, no. 1 (2015): 155: “catholic’ is a better word than ‘universal.’ It is so because it makes clear that people whom God has called to the office of bishop have the duty to connect different eucharistic assemblies, thus making the church catholic by helping us discover how we need the other’s story. In short, there is no substitute for bishops, although you do not have to call them bishops.”
36 See Hauerwas, The Peaceable Kingdom, 106-111.
37 “For if the church is rather than has a social ethic, these actions are our most important social witness. It is in baptism and eucharist that we see most clearly the marks of God’s kingdom in the world. They set out the standard, as we try to bring every aspect of our lives under their sway.” Hauerwas, The Peaceable Kingdom, 108.
38 Hauerwas and Willimon, Resident Aliens, 141.
40 Hauerwas and Willimon, Resident Aliens, 142.
the church in a culture that has no time for time and place.”

Although his positive reception of England’s national church is at least a little strange considering his eye catching ‘anti-Constantinianism’, it must be understood against the backdrop of today’s pervasive voluntarism and consumerism. The parish-model reminds Hauerwas of the tangible and enduring locality of the presence of Jesus, which is not dependent on people’s consumption thereof. Free Churches run the risk of being averse of identifying with a certain place, to be ‘free’ of place, thereby neglecting the vocation of its particularity. Namely, being a local community through which Jesus’ cosmic Lordship inhabits time and place, which is a constituent of the catholicity of the church. This tangible presence or ‘place-making’ is what the “clergy” —a term Hauerwas has wholeheartedly embraced by now—represent as their presence creates “the possibility of recognizing God’s presence.”

Hauerwas shows how post-Christendom provided the church with the opportunity to recover the purpose of ordained ministry through the rediscovery of its own practices as a witnessing community. In Christendom ‘being Christian’ meant to get along with the flow of Christianized society, and the ordained ministry was thereafter conceived of as ‘helping’ people be good citizens. It is a fundamental misconception that made church and ministry irrelevant to a society which has thrown off its Christian ‘yoke’. To Hauerwas the only way forward is to bring missiology back into the heart of the theology of ordained ministry; ministers are ‘missionary agents’ who enable the local church to ‘speak Christian’ in a society reigned by the languages of consumerism, nationalism or individualism. It is telling that he wants us to see mission as the genuine ‘catholicity’ of church and ministry. In short, Hauerwas directs us to derive the intelligibility of ordained ministry from its coherence with the church as an ‘organized form of Jesus’ story’ and not from the church as an institution of civil religion. Bridging the relation between Bible and church, by using ‘story/tradition’ as organizing category, allows us further to avoid a mechanical Biblicism and embrace a more theological

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41 Hauerwas, War and the American Difference, 161.
42 Hauerwas, War and the American Difference, 164.
43 I think Arne Rasmusson—on this point—fails to do justice to the whole of Hauerwas’s theology of ministry, when he suggests that his views are akin to John Howard Yoder: “Yoder’s account of ecclesial hermeneutics assumes a ‘charismatic’ view of the functioning of the church, where there is no distinction between an ordained ministry and an un-ordained laity. When Hauerwas discusses this communal hermeneutical process, he follows Yoder and elaborates in ‘charismatic’ terms.” (see The Church as Polis: From Political Theology to Theological Politics as Exemplified by Jürgen Moltmann and Stanley Hauerwas [STL, vol. 49; Lund: Lund University Press, 1994], 209). Though Rasmusson is right with regard to the community’s hermeneutical involvement (‘communal discernment’), this does not erase the distinctiveness between ordained and non-ordained ministry.
44 It should be noted, however, that Hauerwas does not regard the difference between church and world/civil society in terms of ontology, in the sense of one being inherently more sinful than the other, but solely as a difference on the basis of the moral allegiance to the story of Jesus’s life: “some of whom confess and others of whom do not confess that Jesus is Lord.” Hauerwas, The Peacable Kingdom, 101; also A Community of Character, 109, 150-151. Though it is certainly true that the difference between church and world is primarily eschatological and not spatial (see Wells, Transforming Fate into Destiny, 116, 141-163) it is so since the church lives by another social ethic, the ethic of the coming Kingdom.
interpretative method: "Appealing to Scripture for Hauerwas is appealing not to texts, but to a narrative community called church," summarizes John Thomson adequately. Scripture, accordingly, does not reveal a literal 'blueprint' for the church of all times, but serves as a paradigm that demonstrates the normative character—not absolute commands—of what it means to be the people of God/church of Christ in particular contexts. Scriptural reading therefore requires contextual interpretation. This is also how Hauerwas urges us to read the text of Ephesians 4:11; not as ‘proof text’ but as demonstration of the early Christian practice of clarifying the church’s identity by way of its leaders. In other words, what it means to be church includes the willingness to be determined by these missionary agents known as pastors/leaders/ordained ministers. God’s story, not human sentiments should determine the ordained ministry. It remains unfortunate, nonetheless, that a more detailed exegesis of Ephesians 4:11 is absent.

4.2.2. Kevin Vanhoozer: Directing the Company of the Gospel

Kevin Vanhoozer only recently expressed his concern with the state of the ministry in a publication written together with Owen Strachan, entitled The Pastor as Public Theologian (2015). Central to his argument is the retrieval of the ordained minister as ‘pastor-theologian’. Ordained ministers are first of all ‘theologians’, agents of God’s communicative action or ‘theo-drama.’ Stronger than Hauerwas did previously, Vanhoozer attributes the current ministerial controversy to the parting of ways between ministry and theology. This led to the effect that theological ministry has been replaced by “management skills, strategic plans, ‘leadership’ courses, therapeutic techniques, and so forth.” According to Vanhoozer the contemporary images that are used to describe the ordained ministry (i.e. therapist, manager, and professional) are essentially a form of internal secularization. Instead, he proposes a theo-dramatic understanding, in which also Ephesians 4:11 receives some prominence. Vanhoozer uses this text not only to

45 See extensively Wells, Transforming Fate into Destiny, esp. 40-77. See for example Hauerwas’s theological commentary Matthew (Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible; Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2004).
46 Thomson, The Ecclesiology of Stanley Hauerwas, 19.
49 See Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Introduction: Pastors, Theologians, and Other Public Figures,” in The Pastor as Public Theologian, 2. Like Hauerwas’s and Willimon’s Resident Aliens, it less an academic study than it is a more accessible and visionary pamphlet to address the present ministerial crisis. Not coincidentally, it bears an endorsement by Hauerwas’s former colleague William Willimon on the back cover.
50 Vanhoozer, "Introduction,” 1.
explain the character of ministry, but also to locate its purpose within God’s *missio* to the world.

To understand Vanhoozer’s theology of ordained ministry, we need first of all to understand his idea of theo-drama. This concept plays the lead role in his book *The Drama of Doctrine*, published in 2005, in which he sought to reformulate the importance of doctrinal theology for the contemporary church. He takes ‘drama’ as his all-encompassing image, to illustrate the coherence of Scripture, doctrinal theology, the church and, notably, the ordained ministry—all players into one big divine Play. In essence, Vanhoozer urges a ‘dramatization’ of the nature of theology not to suggest some kind of false pretension, but to better grasp its directional purposes with regard to the church’s faithful participation in God’s redemptive acts (‘the drama of redemption’).\(^{52}\) Interesting regarding this study are especially the last chapters in which Vanhoozer also addresses the role of the pastor in terms of the church’s theological ‘director,’ a notion which I will explain in a moment.

His emphasis on communal participation has everything to do with his ‘lessons learned’ in the field of theological hermeneutics.\(^ {53}\) Postmodern philosophy, and its hermeneutics of suspicion, convinced Vanhoozer of the importance to make hermeneutics a ‘first theology’—that which needs be said ‘first’ in order for the rest to be intelligible.\(^ {54}\) Thus, to restore the possibility of Scriptural authority, and ultimately the speech about God,\(^ {55}\) he develops a performative understanding of texts based on their illocutionary and perlocutionary action, as originally described in ‘Speech-Act theory’ by John Austin and John Searle.\(^ {56}\) Accordingly, Scripture does not only contain

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\(^{52}\) See Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 16, 30-33. In recent years there has been some critique on Vanhoozer’s use of ‘drama’ as it suggests a level of pretension that could imply that it is not ‘real’ but only a ‘make-believe’. See for example Paul Helm, *Faith, Form and Fashion: Classical Reformed Theology and Its Postmodern Critics* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2014), 72.


\(^{55}\) See D. Christopher Spinks, *The Bible and the Crisis of Meaning: Debates on the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), esp. 69-106. He notes that for Vanhoozer the reality of meaning ‘within’ a text, prior to and independent of a reader’s interpretation, converges with and rests upon the recognition of existence of God as ground of all meaning.

\(^{56}\) See Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, esp. 207-214; and *First Theology*, 148-203. ‘Speech-Act theory’ discerns between the locutions (information), illocutions (intentions) and perlocutions (effects) of a text. See further John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963); and John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969). Vanhoozer connects ‘speech act theory’ with Barth’s famous actualistic approach to Scripture (as “Rede-Tat,” see Karl Barth, *KD*, I/1, 150), for whom he has great appreciation. He only regrets Barth’s failure to fully appreciate the linguistic character of revelation, as it shows a close coherence between God’s identity and what God does through this text: “My proposal, then, is to say both the Bible is the Word of God (in the sense of its illocutionary acts) and to say that the Bible becomes the Word of God (in the sense of achieving its perlocutionary effects).” Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 195; and extensively Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “A Person of
propositional truth, as a reference to what God has done, but is itself a divine action (‘performance’). The text of Scripture is essentially a ‘covenant of discourse’: God entering into conversation. ⁵⁷ It is God’s action through Scripture that sustains the magisterial authority of Scripture independently from the effect upon its readers, but not exclusive from the readers’ response. ⁵⁸ Human participation is what God entails. By understanding Scripture as divine performance, he accordingly staged the scene for his big volume The Drama of Doctrine, in which he outlines the ecclesiological consequences of his hermeneutics of Scripture by borrowing Hans Urs von Balthasar’s concept “Theodramatik.”⁵⁹

The term theo-drama calls attention to the action of God (e.g., creation, redemption) in which the church finds itself caught up. The present work, while acknowledging this emphasis, focuses not simply on the dramatic nature of the content of Christian doctrine but, more particularly and distinctly, on the dramatic nature of Christian doctrine itself. Both the process and the product of faith’s search are properly dramatic.⁶⁰

Vanhoozer’s claim is that ‘drama’—in comparison to Hauerwas’s postliberal use of ‘story/narrative’—better expresses the dynamics of the Scriptural narrative, and consequently the relevance of theology for the church. Like Scripture, doctrines are not meant to be referential (to propositions), but are also directive (conveying meaning themselves) in order to shape Christian life: “Truth is dramatic: something to be done.”⁶¹

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⁵⁸ The title of this widely acclaimed book is a clear pun on the title of Stanley Fish’s book, Is There a Text in This Class: The Authority of Interpretative Communities (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980).


⁶⁰ Vanhoozer, Drama of Doctrine, 17-18.

⁶¹ Cf. Vanhoozer, Drama of Doctrine, 419.
By placing ecclesiology in the center of the task of theology, Vanhoozer’s so-called ‘canonical-linguistic project’ essentially joins the postliberal bridging of the conservative’s preoccupation with a Biblical belief system (theory) and the more ‘liberal’ orientation toward right actions (performance), while keeping the center of gravity with Scripture. Nonetheless, he too accentuates that ‘church’ is something Christians do: ‘being church is doing the drama’. This way, Vanhoozer makes the same ‘turn to the local church’ as we found in the theology of Hauerwas. What is more, with regard to Browne’s covenantal ecclesiology, is Vanhoozer’s description of the church as the “covenanted community.” Through the church’s committed performance of the ‘covenantal drama’ depicted in Scripture, the church participates in the continuing play of this redemptive drama. Following Kevin Storer’s analysis of Vanhoozer’s use of Scripture, “Vanhoozer’s covenantal ontology leads to a covenantal ecclesiology.” The scriptural canon is, for Vanhoozer, God’s covenantal act by which he calls the church into life: “The canon, then, is not some social contract drawn up by a voluntary association. The church is not the community of choice but has been brought into being by a divine initiative: an effectual call.” For that reason, the local covenanted church should understand itself as the direct effect (‘speech-act’) of God’s covenanting action. In Vanhoozer’s more recent book Faith Speaking Understanding (2014), this emphasis on locality is even stronger in the face of the Western post-Christendom situation. Accordingly, there can be no talk of an universal church apart from concrete churches gathering locally. He considers ‘Christendom’ an unfitting performance of the gospel, since it is not orientated on God’s acts (theo-drama!), which becomes manifest through vulnerable and prophetic mission in diverse contexts, but relies on the secular politics of force and violence to establish a society along Christian lines. ‘Christendom’ thereby essentially denies the provisional reality of the church as an earthly (‘already’) and

63 Vanhoozer, Drama of Doctrine, 55, 399; also Vanhoozer, “The Voice and the Actor,” 91.
64 “The Scriptures depict a covenantal drama.” Vanhoozer, Drama of Doctrine, 56. He earlier already announced his concept of a ‘dramatic reading’ of the ‘federal’ concept of the covenant of grace (cf. “integrated drama concerning the unfolding of the covenant of grace”). Vanhoozer defines a covenant as follows: “To covenant is to enter into a personal relationship structured by solemn promises to behave in certain ways and to do certain things. Covenants are solemn promises accompanied by ritual ceremonies; they typically involve documents that provide proof of the promissory relationship” (see Drama of Doctrine, 136). Cf. Storer, Reading Scripture to Hear God, 9-10, 69-71.
65 Storer, Reading Scripture to Hear God, 106.
66 Vanhoozer, Drama of Doctrine, 141.
67 See Vanhoozer, Drama of Doctrine, 135-137, 139-141.
68 See Vanhoozer, Faith Speaking Understanding, xiii-xvii, 173, 178, 180-182, 204. Vanhoozer, interestingly, refers specifically to the work of John Howard Yoder and Lesslie Newbigin to state his claim. See also Vanhoozer, “What is Everyday Theology,” 57: “the project of Christendom, for it employs not the sword of the state (temporal, earthly power), but the sword of the Spirit (the imagination-captivating Scriptures).”
eschatological (‘not yet’) embassy of Christ’s rule.69 The ideal of corpus Christianum essentially obscures the mission of local churches to live as corpus Christi: “The local church is just that: the location or place where the rule of God breaks into us and begins to change the world, through the lives of disciples who have learned to enact God’s word in fresh and compelling ways.”70 In view of this mission, Vanhoozer describes Christians as people whose very identity is not dependent on the coherence of the individual self, but whose identity is acted out in the reality of ‘putting on’ Christ (Rom. 13:14; Col. 3:10).71 Christ-like ‘imitation’ is not a false pretension—as in ‘playacting Christ’—but an actual participation in the eschatological reality realized by Christ and brought about by the interplay of Word and Spirit.72 Hence, Vanhoozer’s dramatic refurbishment of Word and Spirit into the “holy prompts” in which God whispers to his disciples how to put on the character of Christ.73 Along these lines, Vanhoozer describes the local church as the visible performance of the theo-drama: God’s speaking action through Scripture embodied in the lives of gathering believers.

Vanhoozer’s concern about the state of ordained ministry has everything to do with this dramatic understanding of ecclesiology. Local churches fail to value communal participation and have turned the ordained ministry into the only ‘actor’ of a ‘deadly theater’.74 Churches thereby fail to see that it is first the whole church which is ‘set apart’ as the ‘company of the gospel’.75 Ministers only come into ‘play’ as directors of drama, who serve the company with “dramaturgical direction.”76 The ordained ministry is not there to substitute the church’s performance, but to help them better perform the gospel by teaching them to speak and act in a manner faithful to Scripture. Seemingly aware of the hierarchic sound that the term ‘director’ carries, Vanhoozer further qualifies his use by putting it in a pneumatological setting:

While the Holy Spirit is the primary director who oversees the global production, it is the pastor who bears the primary responsibility for overseeing local performances. The pastor is an assistant director at best, assisted in turn by the theologian as dramaturge. Ideally, the pastor is also a theologian. In any event,

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69 See Vanhoozer, The Drama of Doctrine, 399-444; Faith Speaking Understanding, 6, 126; and “Artisans in the House of God,” 141, 150-151.
70 Vanhoozer, Faith Speaking Understanding, xvi.
71 “The drama of discipleship is the progressive realization that one’s own existence owes everything to the drama of the Christ.” Vanhoozer, Faith Speaking Understanding, 126.
72 See Vanhoozer, Faith Speaking Understanding, 123-129.
73 Vanhoozer, Faith Speaking Understanding, 130.
74 See Vanhoozer, Drama of Doctrine, 403-404.
75 Vanhoozer connects this ‘set apartness’ of church and ministry with the Greek term ἐκκλησία which is used in the New Testament (notably Mat. 16:18; 18:17), see Vanhoozer, “Artisans in the House of God,” 141.
76 See Vanhoozer, Drama of Doctrine, 447-448; and Vanhoozer, Faith Speaking Understanding, 146-147.
the pastor is also a player in the drama who directs as much as by example as by precept.\textsuperscript{77} The pastor is ‘at best’ an assistant-director of the Spirit, who helps to mediate theologically between the Script and the actors, specifically to help better understand the meaning (illocution) of Scripture, so that they can better communicate “through its bodily action” (perlocution).\textsuperscript{78} In other words, the ordained minister is there to ‘apply’ theology to the local church to know how to participate ‘fittingly’ within God’s mission.\textsuperscript{79} Although Vanhoozer’s locates the ordained ministry primarily within the context of the local performance of the church, he also recognizes the ‘catholic’ role of the minister: “It falls particularly to the pastor to instruct the congregation in ways of theo-drama, and to remind the congregation ‘that they are not the whole of those who believe in God, that they are part of something larger.”\textsuperscript{80} Through the local incorporation of creedal and confessional theology in the liturgy and teaching, a pastor provides ‘catholic direction’ and prevents the local church from theological isolation and imbalance. It is obvious by now that Vanhoozer considers theological skills not merely as a ministerial elective, but it makes up the heart of the ordained ministry: “Theology is not a luxury, an optional extra (like leather trim), but a standard operating feature (like a steering wheel) of the pastorate.”\textsuperscript{81} Ministry is, accordingly, ‘theo-dramatic’ that as its core vocation is to train the local church into theological understanding of the theo-drama.

Describing ministers as ‘assistants of the Holy Spirit’ could generate the suggestion that Vanhoozer understands the ordained ministry mainly from a pneumatological perspective. Yet this is far from the general line of his argument, in which an unmistakable emphasis is placed on Christology. In \textit{The Pastor as Public Theologian}, he writes:

Pastors participate in Jesus’ own ministry, thanks to their union with Christ. Like all believers, pastors are united to the person of Jesus Christ, the risen Son of God, who now reigns at the right hand of the Father. In addition, though to some extent all believers share in the Son’s ongoing work, pastors have been set apart to participate in a distinct way in Christ’s office as the Great Shepherd.\textsuperscript{82} Since the church’s participation in the Trinitarian mission (\textit{missio Dei}) passes through the incarnated Christ, ecclesiology (including the ministry) can only be ‘Trinitarian’ by

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{77} Vanhoozer, \textit{Drama of Doctrine}, 448.
\item \textsuperscript{78} Vanhoozer, \textit{Drama of Doctrine}, 448.
\item \textsuperscript{79} “The mission of theology has everything to do with participating in God’s own mission to the world.” Vanhoozer, “Artisans in the House of God,” 139.
\item \textsuperscript{80} Vanhoozer, \textit{Drama of Doctrine}, 453-454.
\item \textsuperscript{81} Vanhoozer, “Introduction,” 27.
\item \textsuperscript{82} Vanhoozer, “Artisans in the House of God,” 140; and \textit{Pictures at a Theological Exhibition}, 66.
\end{itemize}
the means of Christlike discipleship. However, within this communal participation in Christ, some participate distinctively in Christ’s pastoral office. It is this distinctive participation that clothes the ministry in representative language and separates ordained ministry from civil ‘helping professions’. In this context, Vanhoozer most significantly refers to Ephesians 4:11 to indicate the distinctive Christological vocation of ordained ministry: to build up Christians in Christ. To Vanhoozer, Ephesians 4:11 points toward the divine commission of ordained ministers, who do their work “on God’s behalf.”83 They are ‘gifts’ to sustain the church to live as citizens of the new eschatological order of God: “The pastor is thus the prime (but not the sole) minister, the first (servant) among equals.”84 A minister, following its Latin root minus, is to make himself ‘less’ than the thing or person being served.85 Ministers representatively draw the church to God’s communicative action in Scripture “to cultivate the life of Christ in ourselves, our neighbors, and our neighborhoods.”86 This is where Vanhoozer’s theology of ministry interferes with contemporary notions of ministerial success, in which ordained ministers have become ‘activity managers’ in search of quantitative growth, whereas they should be concerned with theological quality; to sustain the church in their lived understanding (performance) of the Scriptural theo-drama. Ministers respectively help the church to correspond to its eschatological identity, and not submit the world to what has not been fully realized. Ministers do not compass the entire work of the Spirit, nor are they charged to realize Christ’s rule by all means necessary, but rather to sustain the church in its demonstration of what God is doing: “an emissary of the kingdom of God that is even now impinging on the old world in which many think they are still living.”87

We can conclude, thus far, that there are interesting parallels between Vanhoozer and Hauerwas. They both agree that ‘the turn to post-Christendom’ in the West should be embraced as a chance for the church to recover its missionary calling. Elementary in this process, is also a shared consciousness of ‘catholicity’ to balance their emphasis on the local church. They both point out that ordained ministry and ‘the ministry of all’ are not necessarily opposites, but are to be understood as two sides of the same coin: the ordained ministry is a gift to the church to support the ministry of the whole church in the world. The intelligibility of ordained ministry is to a large extent related to their joint understanding of the church as a place of character formation in correspondence with Christ. The real problem therefore, they argue, are the current

83 Vanhoozer, “Artisans in the House of God,” 142; cf. his recent book Pictures at a Theological Exhibition, 69: “The church is the proper domain of doctrine, the operating theater in which pastor-doctors wield the scalpel of the Spirit to mend Christian hearts and minds. Recall that the risen Christ gives pastor-doctors as gifts to the church ‘to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ’ (Eph 4:11-12).”
attempts to approach ministers as ‘religious professionals’ who provide religious services to religious consumers. In opposition to these developments, Hauerwas and Vanhoozer use Ephesians 4:11 as a reminder of the otherworldly origin and purpose of ordained ministry which should not be made contingent upon human needs. Vanhoozer’s own twist to Hauerwas’s proposal has everything to do with his ‘canonical-linguistic project’ which puts the Biblical Scriptures before the believing community. The church is not only the historical legacy of the Jesus-story, but an actual ‘theo-drama’; it not only continues the history of the gospel in which God has spoken, but is itself a lively ‘speech-act’ of God.88 In short, Vanhoozer proposes a covenantal ontology in which Scripture is the constitutive means of God’s incorporation of people into his redemptive mission. The church is therefore more than a surviving colony, it is God’s contemporary ‘covenanted’ community through which the eschatological reality of Christ’s rule is enacted in the world. Vanhoozer’s adoption of covenantal language in terms of ‘drama/speech-act’ obviously provides an interesting parallel to retrieving Browne’s Puritan tradition. It is unfortunate, therefore, that he does not include ordained minister more clearly in his covenantal terminology. Finally, Vanhoozer’s proposal offers a more balanced account of church and ordained ministry in relation to both Word and Spirit.

4.3. The Suspicion Toward Authority
A direct cause of the current crisis facing ordained ministry is its association with abusive power and authoritarianism. Charles Spurgeon in his day criticized the self-evident authority of the institutionalized and university-trained clergy on the basis of a presumed apostolic succession (§ 1.6.2.). He considered instituted forms of authority a direct contradiction with the autonomy of the local church. This emphasis on collective authority is also a central point in James McClendon’s and Miroslav Volf’s argument (§ 1.6.1. and § 1.6.3.). They both argued for more communitarian-oriented structures of authority and governance to better accommodate the communal dimension of congregational ecclesiology. McClendon therefore speaks of ‘specialist advice’. Volf, in order to preserve voluntarism and egalitarianism, only allows for a minister’s authority as a special application of the actual authority that lies with the collective community. His biggest fear is a coercive authoritarianism that destroys the communal dimension of the Free Church tradition. The result is that in today’s ecclesiology the need for ministerial accountability is often highly accentuated (§ 1.4.), even while ministerial authority has

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88 Vanhoozer hereby seems to have met the critical question of Samuel Wells toward Hauerwas’s ecclesiology: “Put in a different way, is redemption a story which the community remembers, or a drama which it performs?” Transforming Fate into Destiny, 98. Kevin Storer, in his analysis, rightly recognizes Vanhoozer’s ontological priority of Scripture as mediation of Christ, but unnecessarily separates bibliology from ecclesiology, when he states that Vanhoozer “tends to suggest that Christ uses Scripture rather than the church for self-mediation” (Reading Scripture to Hear God, 115). For it seems more faithful to Vanhoozer’s argument to say that his bibliology mediates Christ’s presence in the church. It is obedience to Christ’s Word in Scripture that makes the church ‘church’.
become largely suspect. The current cultural setting compels us to redefine what it means to say—as for example Browne does—that a minister is ‘charged and authorized’ by God? To answer this question, we return to Hauerwas and Vanhoozer and their understanding of ministerial authority. Hauerwas explains the problem of ministerial authority with today’s emphasis on voluntary religion as an all determinative factor, reflecting more the politics of Western democracy than the ‘politics of Jesus’. Vanhoozer, however, approaches ministerial authority from his hermeneutical concern with the authority of Scripture.

4.3.1. Stanley Hauerwas: Authority as Communal Power

The problem of authority is a major theme in Hauerwas’s literature, specifically in relation to the context of liberal democracy. Hauerwas’s major difficulty with democracy is that a politics based on individual authority cannot sustain the church’s calling to be a place of character formation. Only a ‘polis’ in which every individual subordinates his or her own interests to a collective authority can. He regrets to see how churches due to the influences of a democratic ethos elevated the individual interest above the communal concerns. Hauerwas’s own understanding of ministerial authority is an effort to help the church regain what it means to live under the authority of Christ. The value of his argument, in my view, is again his reformulation of what the central question concerning authority should be. That is not whether ministerial authority should be recognized or not, but rather: “how authority should be understood as an aid for the discovery of the common good of community.” To better understand Hauerwas’s take on ministerial authority in the context of ecclesiology, it worthwhile to consider his ‘allegorical’ reading of Richard Adam’s novel Watership Down (1972) in the first chapter of A Community of Character (1981). In response to this story Hauerwas formulates ten theses to exemplify the moral significance of narrative for the construal of

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89 Hauerwas and Willimon, Resident Aliens, 33; also Peaceable Kingdom, 111-115. Hauerwas especially refers to the religious movement known as ‘Social Gospel,’ notably propagated by Walter Rauschenbusch (see his Christianizing the Social Order, 1912; and A Theology for the Social Gospel, 1917). Rauschenbusch identified democratic ideals with Christianity and understood a Christian’s task in terms of extending democratic practices. See Stanley Hauerwas, A Better Hope: Resources for a Church Confronting Capitalism, Democracy, and Postmodernity (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2000), 71-108; and The Work of Theology, esp. 174-179.


91 Cf. “In this respect, no aspect of democratic ideology has been more destructive to the church than the assumption that democracy is—or should be—that form of government in which ‘the people’ rule. The empowerment of the ‘common man’ has robbed the church internally of those forms of discipline through which people acquire the virtues that ironically may be of service to what people take to be democratic social orders.” Stanley Hauerwas, Dispatches From The Front: Theological Engagements with the Secular (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 105.

92 Hauerwas, The Work of Theology, 189.
Christian life. One of which specifically concerns the relationship between authority and community:

1.7 Christian social ethics depends on the development of leadership in the church that can trust and depend on the diversity of gifts in the community.

The authority necessary for leadership in the church should derive from the willingness of Christians to risk speaking the truth to and hearing the truth from those in charge. In societies that fear truth, leadership depends on the ability to provide security rather than the ability to let the diversity of the community serve as the means to live truthfully. Only the latter form of community can afford to have their leaders’ mistakes acknowledged without their ceasing to exercise authority.93

At first sight it is interesting to see Hauerwas use the term ‘leadership’, and not clergy, ministers or pastors, as he would do later. After looking further it is the reversed reasoning that draws attention. For Hauerwas begins his argument about the need for authority with the ‘willingness’ of the congregation to have leaders that speak truthfully on the basis of the Christian story. His basic thesis is that if authority would rest on the ‘story-formed community’ it would enable the diversity of gifts within the community. In the story of Watership Down, a rabbit by the name of Hazel develops a form of leadership which is not sustained by personal power and the control of other rabbits, but rather by depending on the inclusion of other rabbits’ specific gifts.94 Hazel inspired Hauerwas to imagine a form of authority that, instead of being a hindrance, actually fosters communal participation. This—what may be aptly called—‘story-formed authority’ is not based on rational decisions that require absolute control of others but a form of authority that depends on others.95 Because, when everybody is free ‘to make up his or her own story’, safety depends on neutral rationality guaranteed by the absolute control of some and the submission of others. A story-formed authority, on the contrary, is maintained by practical wisdom on the basis of a shared story/tradition. Moreover, since story-formed authority is not based on fear but on trust, leaders are not expected to be without faults, but are allowed to learn from their mistakes. In short, Watership Down provides Hauerwas with an vivid illustration that explains how (ministerial) authority

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93 Hauerwas, Community of Character, 11.
94 “he just became chief rabbit because he seemed to know how to make the decisions that made best use of everyone’s talents and he made everyone face up to the necessities of their situation.” Hauerwas, Community of Character, 29.
95 Cf. “Those who would change society too often feel the only alternative to the conservative option is to find a rational basis for social organization which is tradition-free. As a result they become captured by a tradition which is more tyrannical because it has the pretense of absolute rationality. In contrast, I am suggesting that substantive traditions are not at odds with reason but are bearers of rationality and innovation.” Hauerwas, Community of Character, 26.
and accountability are to be envisioned in terms of story/tradition, trust, and community.  

In an essay concerning the moral authority of Scripture, in the same volume, Hauerwas directs the above conclusions more specifically to ecclesiology. He continues his argument that it is story/tradition that enables communal authority: “For authority is that power of a community that allows for reasoned interpretations of the community’s past and future goals.” By implication, Hauerwas concludes that authority does not necessarily arise from a deficiency in a community, but is rather a function of true community. He considers it wrong to equate authority always with the power of coercion. Story-formed authority, then, is the ability to justify decisions in terms of the shared traditions of the community. It follows, writes Hauerwas, that community, tradition and authority are interrelated. Authority is not there to resolve or correct a community’s failures, but more accurately to allow a community to function as a community. Where tradition provides coherence through a shared past, authority allows a community to interpret this tradition, in order to find continuity with the past in the present. In other words, authority “proceeds from a common life made possible by tradition.” This is the story-formed authority that Hauerwas observed in Watership Down: an authority not maintained by control but by accountable conversation. He concludes:

In summary I have suggested that authority requires community, but it is equally true that community must have authority. For authority is that reflection initiated by a community’s traditions through which a common goal can be pursued. Authority is, therefore, the means through which a community is able to journey from where it is, to where it ought to be. It is set on its way by the language and practices from tradition, but while on its way must often subtly reform those practices and language in accordance with its new perception of truth.

Hauerwas thus argues that non-authoritarian authority ‘within’ a community can only exist when it draws upon a higher and undisputed authority which cannot be equated nor reduced to a particular individual or set of individuals. Only by a transparent application of the community’s joint recognition of the respective authority can this derivative form of authority be maintained. Story-formed authority is per definition accountable, for accountability is the very means by which it is exercised. Whereas Hauerwas particularly discusses the role of Scripture in this essay, it does have implications regarding

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97 Hauerwas, Community of Character, 60. Hauerwas adheres on this point to the philosophy of Yves Simon, A General Theory of Authority (Notre Dame; University of Notre Dame Press, [1962], 1980). Simon was a French philosopher who worked at the University of Notre Dame from 1938 until 1948.  
98 Hauerwas, Community of Character, 62.  
99 Hauerwas, Community of Character, 63.
ministerial authority. He basically argues that tradition, or Scripture for that matter, does not explain itself. A community is in need of people who can interpret their shared tradition in view of new situations. Although in the essay itself he only refers to the ‘theologian’ as the one who leads the community in Scriptural interpretation, it most probably includes the role of ordained ministers. 100 Similarly, in Peaceable Kingdom, Hauerwas states that the Bible “without the community, without expounders, and interpreters, and hearers is a dead book.” 101 It remains difficult to precisely establish how Hauerwas envisions the subordinate relationships between church, Scripture and ministerial authority, however. What is clear, is that Hauerwas’s rejects the reformed principle of the self-evidence of Scripture’s authority (autopistia), 102 since Scripture is rather dependent on the community’s willingness to be governed by its story and the availability of interpreters:

Scripture has authority in the church, not because no one knows the truth, but because the truth is a conversation for which Scripture set the agenda and boundaries. Those with authority are those who would serve by helping the church hear better, and correspond to the stories of God as we find them in Scripture.103

Ministerial authority is a derivative of a joint commitment to have Scripture for a higher authority, so it seems. Exemplary therefore, is his call to use sermon lectionaries as to demonstrate that a minister’s authority is not autonomous but given. 104 Though Scripture does have a critical function for Hauerwas, this is dependent on the community’s willingness to let itself be corrected by Scripture: “it proposes that Christians (and we hope others) take them to heart (and mind) because they have been found to be crucial to a people that we must be if we are to be capable of remembering—for ourselves and the world—the story of God’s dealing with us.”105 Scripture is part of the tradition of the church and therefore cannot be severed from the interpretative community: “the church creates Bible,” writes Hauerwas in Resident Aliens.106 Scripture’s authority is according to Hauerwas’ idea anchored in the church’s communal life and exercised under direction of those who are recognized to lead in practical interpretation. In short, it is the church’s

100 See Hauerwas, Community of Character, 64-66. Hauerwas discusses the work of David Kelsey, particular his The Uses of Scriptures in Recent Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975). According to Hauerwas, Kelsey fails to incorporate the way in which Scripture morally forms the community as a resource of survival to live as a faithful witness.
101 Hauerwas, Peaceable Kingdom, 98.
102 See Hauerwas, A Community of Character, 53-71; and The Peaceable Kingdom, 64-71, 98-99.
103 Hauerwas, Peaceable Kingdom, 98.
104 Cf. “Yet why should I have chosen those particular texts? The answer is quite simple—I did not choose them. They were the lectionary texts given me by my church for Pentecost. I was therefore authorized by the church to hold them up authoritatively for the whole church.” Hauerwas, Christian Existence Today, 55.
105 Hauerwas, A Community of Character, 70.
106 Hauerwas and Willimon, Resident Aliens, 128; also Community of Character, 59.
recognition of the authority of Scripture that generates certain people who are able to remind the church of the implications of this commitment. In Resident Aliens Hauerwas therefore describes the substance of ministerial authority as “the task of interpretation.” Rather than helping people to continue their ‘own’ life, the authority of the ministry is directed to sustain the church in its faithfulness to the Christian story, as well as how it is to determine their lives. The same line of thought also sparked his controversial book Unleashing the Scripture (1993), in which Hauerwas argues to take the Bible out of the hands of the individual reader. Since individualistic interpretation presupposes that Scripture has authority ‘outside’ of the church and its designated interpreters, it follows that:

The claim that the meaning of the Scripture is plain, of course, goes hand in hand with the North American distrust of all forms of authority. To make the Bible accessible to anyone is to declare that clergy status is secondary. The Bible becomes the possession not of the Church but now of the citizen, who has every right to determine its meaning.

Hauerwas’s problem with the autopistia of Scripture is directly related to the ordained ministry. Partly because—like the authority of Scripture is anchored in the authoritative community of the church—ministerial authority is not self-evident, but rests on the communal recognition that Scripture cannot be individually interpreted. Moreover, this is also the case since participating in the church also involves a submission to the community’s understanding and its recognized interpreters called ‘clergy’. With this understanding of authority, the church is quite different from civil society. Thus he writes in A Community of Character:

107 See Hauerwas and Willimon, Resident Aliens, 162-163.
108 Hauerwas and Willimon, Resident Aliens, 121.
109 Cf. “The theologian’s job is not to make the gospel credible to the modern world, but to make the world credible to the gospel.” Hauerwas and Willimon, Resident Aliens, 24.
110 See Stanley Hauerwas, Unleashing the Scripture: Freeing the Bible from Captivity to America (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), esp. 15-18. Wells calls it “one of his most polemical works.” See Transforming Fate into Destiny, 76.
111 Hauerwas, Unleashing the Scripture, 31-32.
112 Cf. “In short if we are to understand Scripture it is necessary that we place ourselves under authority, a placement that at least begins by our willingness to accept the discipline of the Church’s preaching.” Hauerwas, Unleashing the Scripture, 38.
113 “Accordingly, fundamentalism and biblical criticism are Enlightenment ideologies in the service of the fictive agent of Enlightenment—namely, the rational individual—who believes that truth in general (and particularly the truth of Christian faith can be known without initiation into a community that requires transformation of the self. In this sense, fundamentalism and biblical criticism are attempts to maintain the influence of Constantinian Christianity—now clothed in the power of Enlightenment rationality—in the interest of continuing Christianity’s hegemony over the ethos of North American cultures. Hauerwas, Unleashing the Scripture, 35.
But the church is radically not democratic if by democratic we mean that no one knows the truth and therefore everyone’s opinion counts equally. Christians do not believe that there is no truth; rather truth can only be known through struggle. That is exactly why authority in the church is vested in those we have learned to call saints in recognition of their more complete appropriation of that truth.  

What makes the church different from mere democracy is its recognition that God is the ultimate authority and that, therefore, not every individual’s opinion carries the same weight. This is Hauerwas’ problem with current egalitarianism. Not only does it sacrifice the particular gifts of people under the guise of equality, but also since its neglects to commit to a governing story that identifies and sustains a community’s hierarchy of goods. To be a community under God’s authority, therefore, requires no majority vote, but a shared understanding of the governing story through the interpretation of ‘invested’ members. Hauerwas uses the term ‘invested’ expressively to indicate a certain public authority that goes with this communal role. This is also how Hauerwas reads the story of Israel. Only because God has spoken and acted decisively into history, a story existed that provided Israel with guidance to indicate how God was to be followed, and subsequently made them ‘Israel’. It was this story that subsequently qualified the authority of Israel’s offices:

Each of the major offices in Israel—king, priest, and prophet—also drew its substance from the need for Israel to have a visible exemplar to show how to follow the Lord. What was needed were people who embodied in their lives and work the vocation of Israel to ‘walk’ in the ‘way’ of the Lord.

Israel’s authorities served as visible testimony of Israel’s calling to live as people of God. Although Hauerwas—at least here in his Peaceable Kingdom—draws no direct conclusion for the role of ordained ministry in the church, the basic reasoning runs parallel with his argument in Resident Aliens and A Community of Character: authority exists as a function of the community’s recognition of God’s authority.

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114 Hauerwas, Community of Character, 85; cf. The Work of Theology, 189-190.
115 See Hauerwas’s recent dialogue with Brian Brock in Beginnings: Interrogating Hauerwas, ed. Kevin Hargaden (Enquiries in Theological Ethics, vol. 2; London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 10: “Egalitarianism, to the extent that it assumes that a person is a person without taking account of their history and particularity means that they will be treated equally in a way that they ought to be treated unequally in order to value their contribution to the community. So, I say, egalitarianism is the opiate of the masses. ... Separated from an account of the hierarchy of goods, I think egalitarianism is destructive.”
116 See Hauerwas, Peaceable Kingdom, 76-81.
117 “Therefore, the task of Israel—indeed the very thing that makes Israel to be Israel—is to walk in the way of the Lord, that is to imitate God through the means of the prophet (Torah), the king (Sonship), and the priest (Knowledge).” Peaceable Kingdom, 77.
118 Hauerwas, Peaceable Kingdom, 78.
In the follow-up publication of *Resident Aliens*—entitled *After Christendom?* (1991, 1999)—Hauerwas tightens his critique upon the church’s adoption of democracy even further, and explains how voluntary religion has eventually jeopardized every concept of ministerial authority. While he admits that voluntary religion was once required to secure personal commitment over against the coercion of the civil state, it has become a vehicle of democratic ideals and consumer choice:

Determined by past presuppositions about the importance of commitment for the living of the Christian life, we have underwritten a voluntaristic conception of the Christian faith, which presupposes that one can become a Christian without training. The difficulty is that once such a position has been established, any alternative cannot help appearing as an authoritarian imposition.

The problem with the contemporary understanding of voluntary religion is that it is used as argument against any kind of authority, and thus thereby underwriting the very substance of the church as a disciplined community. As he would affirm later: “The voluntary character of the church, enshrined in the language of ‘joining the church,’ turns out to be a perfect Constantinian strategy.” To leave membership entirely up to individual’s choice is to make Christian faith available to every individual irrespective of discipleship and commitment. As a result, Hauerwas writes, “it seems we lack the conceptual resources to help us understand how the church can reclaim for itself what it means to be a community of care and discipline.” Without authority, the church lacks the means to define itself as a community within the story of Jesus, and subsequently falls prey to stories that underwrite individual choice. In *Sanctify Them in the Truth* (1998), Hauerwas therefore opts for a ‘non-voluntary community’ in which people are reminded that churchgoing is not a mere option, but that it follows out of God’s choosing of us and, thus, presupposes obedience to an adequate authority. A worthwhile example, of how

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119 See Stanley Hauerwas, *After Christendom? How the Church Is to Behave If Freedom, Justice, and a Christian Nation are Bad Ideas* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, [1991], 1999), 97. In the new introduction, added in 1999, Hauerwas explains that this book should be understood as a (logical) prequel rather than as a sequel, an “attempt to develop the theological politics” (*After Christendom*, 5) that underlay the arguments of *Resident Aliens*.

120 Hauerwas, *After Christendom*, 98-99. Hauerwas, however, is fully aware that he himself cannot entirely escape his own criticism either: “So I go to church in Aldersgate because I like the church which, of course, bothers me. No matter what its peculiar attractions may be, it is finally part of a capitalist economy, which means that my involvement at Aldersgate is but another consumer choice. Therefore, in my own ecclesial life I reproduce the kind of church shopping I otherwise wish to defeat.” Hauerwas, *Sanctify Them in the Truth*, 163.

121 “The very fact that we let the issue be framed by terms—such as individual and community, freedom and authority, care versus discipline—is an indication of our loss of coherence and the survival of fragments necessary for Christians to make our disciplines the way we care.” Hauerwas, *After Christendom*, 99.


123 Hauerwas, *After Christendom*, 100.

124 See Hauerwas, *Sanctify Them in the Truth*, 164. ‘Non-voluntary’ is here used not in opposition to voluntary in the sense of ‘coerced’, but as a ‘disciplined’ and ‘committed’ form of membership.
Hauerwas himself subjected his individual interest to the collective authority of the church, is narrated by William Cavanaugh in the *Hauerwas Reader* (2001). When Hauerwas was asked to come to Duke Divinity School, he placed the decision whether he would go or not in the hands of his church: Broadway Methodist Church in South Bend. Cavanaugh’s comments: “What Hauerwas continues to teach is that the church must take seriously the authority given by the Holy Spirit if it is to save people from the tyranny of their own individual wills.”

To regain a true sense of ministerial authority, Hauerwas makes a telling analogy with his father’s craft of bricklaying. In order to learn the craft of bricklaying, writes Hauerwas, one needs to learn both a set of skills and a certain language that informs these skills: “The language embodies the history of the craft of bricklaying. So when you learn to be a bricklayer you are not learning a craft *de novo* but rather being initiated into a history.” The skills of bricklaying have developed in the process of history, and are constantly passed on through the professional jargon of bricklaying. In other words, you cannot acquire these skills by ‘democratic choice’. Only through adequate initiation by a master craftsman can one learn to be a bricklayer. The language of crafts (‘skills’) illustrate Hauerwas’s continuous claim that ‘being Christian’ cannot be severed from authoritative training. Furthermore, it shows that authority cannot be self-sustained but is dependent to the degree that a person acquired the ‘character’ that embodies the discipline of the specific community: “it is the ability to teach others how to learn this type of knowing these skills, through which the power of the master within the community of the craft is legitimated as a rational authority.” From which it follows that the requirements for ministerial authority, in Hauerwas’s perspective, are not different from Christian witness in general: truthful speech sustained by embodied expertise. In fact, the whole concept of ministerial authority is set upon enabling others to become authoritative witnesses themselves. I think I am therefore right to conclude to

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126 Cavanaugh, “Stan the Man,” 23.


130 “That is why there can be no knowledge without appropriate authority,” Hauerwas, *After Christendom*, 105.


that Hauerwas understands the authority of an ordained ministry as a means to develop the ‘ministry of witness’ of the whole church. The skills mentioned, include not only moral skills—such as forgiveness, patience and hope—but specifically also the exegetical, liturgical and hermeneutical skills to help the church understand the governing story as found in Scripture.\textsuperscript{133} Precisely because ministerial authority in the church is ‘story-formed’ it cannot be acquired by choice, but only by initiation in the disciplinary practices of the Christian community.\textsuperscript{134} Hauerwas ends his exposition on authority in \textit{After Christendom} with a vivid example. He recalls a television documentary about a fundamentalist church in Boston in which the pastor admonished a church member to reconcile himself with his adulterous wife after she had confessed her sin and had been disciplined by the community. Hauerwas commends the actions of this minister with familiar terms: “In Boston, one with authority spoke to another on behalf of the central skills of the church which draw their intelligibility from the gospel. There we have an example of congregational care and discipline that joins together for the ‘upbuilding’ of the Christian community.”\textsuperscript{135} This is why Hauerwas is not afraid to use the term ‘power’ to explain ministerial authority. Since, what characterizes this act is the practical application of the Christian story in concrete circumstances, forgiveness of sins is not up to a majority vote, so to speak, but a defining practice of the Christian community that makes it a ‘church’.

Hauerwas associates ministerial authority predominantly with the Biblical concept of ‘prophecy’. In an essay, “The Pastor as Prophet”—included in \textit{Christian Existence Today} (1988)—he articulates his sorrow about the failure of the ministry to exhibit their prophetic vocation due to the cultural situation of the church in the West. He observes: “The church no longer represents a community of authority through which the minister exercises leadership by calling the community to live in accordance with its own best convictions. Rather, the church has become a voluntary institution in which membership is determined by the consent of the individual believer.”\textsuperscript{136} Churches no longer search for a minister who can speak ‘the truth’ on the basis of their governing story, but look for a pastor with a “winning personality.”\textsuperscript{137} Following John Howard Yoder’s and Joseph Blenkinsopp’s concept of prophecy, Hauerwas explains prophecy in

\textsuperscript{133} See Hauerwas, \textit{Christian Existence Today}, 143.
\textsuperscript{134} Cf. “I want to be part of a community with the habits and practices that will make me do what I would otherwise not choose to do and then to learn to like what I have been forced to do.” Stanley Hauerwas, \textit{In Good Company: The Church as Polis} (Notre Dame: The University of Notre Dame, 1995), 75.
\textsuperscript{135} Hauerwas, \textit{After Christendom}, 111.
\textsuperscript{136} Hauerwas, \textit{Christian Existence Today}, 150. See also \textit{After Christendom}, 95. Recently Hauerwas reaffirmed his critique: “In the world in which we find ourselves, a world in which the church has lost the ability to shape the lives of people who identify as Christian, it is a hard to be critical of those in the ministry who seek to build their churches around what people think they need rather than what the gospel tells us we should want.” \textit{The Work of Theology}, 105.
\textsuperscript{137} Hauerwas, \textit{Christian Existence Today}, 150.
exactly the same vocabulary as we have seen above: speaking the word of God by
interpreting and explaining events directly or in light of past prophecy.138

The pastor, therefore, is engaged in a constant task of helping the church
interpret itself and the world through many small and great tasks that build up
the people of God. It is not a question of pastor or prophet, but how one pastors.
Pastoring will be authentic to the extent that it avoids the sentimentalities which
abound today concerning what it means to be a ‘caring community.’139

In this quotation many strings come together. Hauerwas’s earlier call—to reorient
the church in the story of Jesus instead of human sentiments—returns here as the basic
prophetic task of the ordained ministry. For Hauerwas, then, “it is not a question of
whether the pastor can be prophetic, but rather that the pastor must be prophetic, given
the nature of the community that he or she serves.”140 Ministerial authority is drawing on
the authority of the church, in order to help the church navigate within the world on the
basis of the Christian story, instead of underwriting cultural assumptions. Another
illustration by Hauerwas helps to make his concept of ministerial authority in terms of
prophecy more concrete. A young pastor was sought by a pregnant woman over the
possibility of having an abortion.141 Out of fear of being moralistic, he advised her to seek
professional counseling. There they worked on the self-esteem she needed to find the
social permission for abortion. Hauerwas considers this story a failure since this pastor
reduced pastoral care to sentimentality. Instead of “drawing on the very resources of the
gospel to inform his ministry,” this pastor liked to be seen as understanding and
nonjudgmental.142

To conclude, it is remarkable how Hauerwas’s concept of ministerial authority
enables us to review our negative associations with authority, which are so often confused
with authoritarianism, abuse and oppression.143 Ministerial authority does not have to be
problematic for ‘real community’, but can be the very means by which community is
build, and ‘save people from the tyranny of their own individual wills’. It shows the
difference between our times and Browne’s age of Christendom. Where Browne’s call for
voluntarism sought to facilitate personal commitment, Hauerwas’ criticism of
voluntarism is likewise an attempt to counter the lack of commitment in our consumerist
age. Hauerwas, furthermore, shows how it is precisely the ‘story formed’ structure of the
church that necessitates an interpretative authority that does not require coercion and

139 Hauerwas, Christian Existence Today, 162.
142 Hauerwas, Christian Existence Today, 164.
violent oppression, and still be more than just ‘specialist advice’.144 Since, the very means of ministerial authority that binds the community, its governing story, legitimizes ministerial authority as ‘prophetic power’. Authority, in this sense, is the ability to draw upon the shared story/tradition of the community to determine what it means to be church in concrete circumstances, and should not be confused with a kind of exclusive right of decision making. Rather, it should be associated with the practice of initiation, providing faithful explanation of the Christian story to strengthen the church’s corporate witness. Authority is thus not up to choice, but requires training and skills. Again, it shows how the particular practices of the church provide intelligibility.145 Of course, Hauerwas’s emphasis on interpretation evokes the question: how do you which interpretation is authoritative? It is unclear, furthermore, exactly how Hauerwas’ view remains participatory, as Hauerwas finds exhibited by the rabbit Hazel in Watership Down. What is clear, however, is that ministerial authority cannot be claimed nor usurped when it is not embodied by a certain life or supported by communal recognition. With regard to Vanhoozer, a clearer difference appears. For where the latter stresses the priority of Scripture over the community, Hauerwas places all priority with the ‘willing community’.

4.3.2. Kevin Vanhoozer: Authority as Canonical Improvisation
Where Hauerwas develops his view of ministerial authority mostly in response to liberal democracy, Vanhoozer’s concern is primarily with the postmodern suspicion toward authoritative interpretation.146 Considering Vanhoozer’s understanding of Scripture as ‘script’ for covenantal life,147 it is no surprise to see him ascribe Scripture alone with “magisterial authority.”148 For only Scripture’s communicative action is identical with God’s speaking action. And, as he writes in The Drama of Doctrine, “[e]cclesial authority

144 Cf. Michael G. Cartwright, “Afterword: Stanley Hauerwas’s Essays in Theological Ethics: A Reader’s Guide,” in The Hauerwas Reader, 636-637: “Hauerwas argues that “the very meaning of authority is community-dependent. Though authority is often confused with power or coercion, it draws its life from community in a quite different manner.”


146 Cf. Vanhoozer, Faith Speaking Understanding, 61; and see elaborately his Is There a Meaning in This Text?, esp. 19-32. Under influence of literary critics such as Derrida (‘hermeneutics of suspicion’), the question has become ‘how can we read texts in such a way that as to avoid seeing ourselves’ and end up with interpretation as nothing more than mere opinion? Stanley Fish (see Is There a Text in This Class?, 1982), subsequently, argued that ‘meaning’ is not so much found in the text, as well as something produced by the text in the reader. Consequently, texts themselves cannot convey an authoritative ‘meaning’, but authority ‘is constituted by the reader’s reading experience.

147 See Vanhoozer, Drama of Doctrine, 18-20, esp. 115-150, 322, 400; also “What is Everyday Theology,” 44-45; Faith Speaking Understanding, 71-72; and “In the Evangelical Mood,” 114.

148 “If the canon enjoys magisterial authority, then, it is only because it is Christ’s word, the norm that specifies what ‘right relationship’ to Christ and ‘right participation in the theo-drama actually look like.” Vanhoozer, Drama of Doctrine, 208.
is thus a matter of being rightly related to the one who is the truth.” 149 It follows, then, that for Vanhoozer ministerial authority must somehow be rooted in the authority of Scripture. 150 I will therefore first explain how Vanhoozer understands Scriptural authority in relation to human interpretation, before further assessing his idea of ministerial authority.

The contemporary disbelief toward the possibility of authoritative texts, including Scripture, is the major theme of Vanhoozer’s Is There a Meaning in This Text? (1998). There he explains this disbelief as the unwillingness to ‘receive’ texts properly, largely out of the fear that they might become instruments of personal endeavors and oppression. What is needed, therefore, argues Vanhoozer, is a theological hermeneutics that refuses to ‘get in the way’ of the text. A form of active listening to texts as “a genuine other” that lets “the text have its own say first.” 151 Thus, for texts to have authority, interpretation first necessitates a vulnerable attitude, marked by honesty, openness, attentiveness and obedience toward the author’s intention (illocution). 152 And, second, in accordance with his theo-dramatic understanding of Scripture, an appropriate response (perlocution) to the author’s intention. Vanhoozer’s assessment of interpretation—including both the illocution and perlocution of the text—is essentially a doctrinal reception of Nicholas Wolterstorff’s concept “divine authorial discourse.” 153 Hence, interpretation—far from being merely a cerebral activity—requires practical wisdom: “The wise reader knows not only how to interpret, but more importantly, what interpretation is for. Wise readers see themselves in the mirror of the biblical text as they actually are, and they respond appropriately.” 154 Biblical interpretation, therefore,

149 Vanhoozer, Drama of Doctrine, 207.
150 Cf. “authority is derivative—ministerial, not magisterial.” Vanhoozer, Drama of Doctrine, 208.
151 Vanhoozer, Is There a Meaning in This Text?, 374; and First Theology, 212-213. Against advocates of the ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’, the so-called ‘hermeneutical non-realists’ who regard interpretation as self-projection and therefore a form of violence to a text, he contends that their claim rests on the confusion of illocutions with perlocutions. In other words, non-realists take the effects of a text to be its intent, and are therefore themselves guilty of suppression. By contrast, Vanhoozer claims, while acknowledging that no interpretation is free from ideology, that only hermeneutical realism can do justice to the otherness of texts as it is open to a certain (transcendent) meaning potential in the text (the author’s ‘communicative action’), see Is There a Meaning in This Text?, esp. 240-259, 381-392.
152 See Vanhoozer, Is There a Meaning in This Text?, 376-377, 402-403
154 Vanhoozer, Is There a Meaning in This Text?, 377-378. Kevin Storer, in his research, rightly notes that the uniqueness of Scripture’s divine authorship becomes a more central argument in Vanhoozer’s later period—starting with First Theology in 2001—than in his earlier work which focused more on human authorship in general, such as his Is There a Meaning in This Text (see Storer, Reading Scripture to Hear God, esp. 4-7, 56-57). However, since this study is concerned
requires a wisdom-oriented theology or ‘sapiential theology’ (Lt. *sapientia*).\textsuperscript{155} Sapiential theology is driven by a hermeneutics of trust rather than suspicion, and a morality of communal accountability rather than of individual free play.\textsuperscript{156} These moral duties are fitting to the theological identity of Scripture as a ‘covenant of discourse’ (see above § 4.2.1.). For the covenantal nature of Scripture invites the reader to respond appropriately, not only by taking note of ‘was da steht’ (what is written there)\textsuperscript{157} but also recognizing the text’s intention and its demand: to participate in what God is ‘doing’ through the text. And so, Vanhoozer concludes, interpretation is not only a matter of explanation but necessarily involves application or ‘performance’: “Readers follow some texts not only as friends with whom they keep company, but as authorities in relation to whom they are disciples.”\textsuperscript{158} It is the obedient application in the life of a reader by which the Bible becomes what it is intended to be, namely authoritative ‘Scripture’\textsuperscript{159} Discipleship is for that reason an inherent part of Biblical interpretation. On this point Vanhoozer clearly follows Hauerwas’s earlier argument, stating that it is only through embodiment that scriptural interpretation becomes truly authoritative.\textsuperscript{160} We can conclude, thus far, that if ministers are to have authority in a postmodern context, this can only be attained through the interpretative attitude of an accountable disciple: a reader who is both responsive in and responsible for his interpretation.

The logical question is then whether a minister’s authority differs in any way from the authority of other Christians? Is not the whole community called to discipleship and entrusted with the privilege and responsibility to perform the Scriptures? To answer this question, it first is significant to observe Vanhoozer’s preference for a communitarian reading of the Bible, arguing that a ‘plurality of voices’ is required to acquire a more fully articulation of its meaning.\textsuperscript{161} He draws on Luther’s principle of the general priesthood, which he fittingly rephrases as the ‘playerhood of all believers’:

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with ministerial authority, this paragraph offers a more integrated analysis of Vanhoozer’s concept of authoritative interpretation.

\textsuperscript{155} Vanhoozer introduces this term in an article of 2000 (see his “The Voice and the Actor,” 87-88) and continues to use to characterize his theology both in *Drama of Doctrine*, esp. 13, 252-256; and *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 204-205.

\textsuperscript{156} Instead of accountability Vanhoozer speaks of “responsible response” to denote to the morality of interpretation, which implicitly refers to Alasdair MacIntyre’s virtue-ethics (viz. ‘Which ethics? Whose responsibility?’), see Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, esp. 392-401, 405-407.

\textsuperscript{157} See Karl Barth, “Vorwort zur zweiten Auflage” in *Der Römerbrief* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, [1922], 1978), xi.

\textsuperscript{158} Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 378.

\textsuperscript{159} See Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 380-281.

\textsuperscript{160} Cf. “Meaning, I will argue, is a form of doing.” Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 26.

\textsuperscript{161} See Vanhoozer, “The Voice and the Actor,” 80. Maarten Wisse, unnecessarily, presents an overly reductionist reading of Vanhoozer’s concept of communicative action, by giving the impression that he only allows for the original (the author’s) meaning at the exclusion of creativity. See his *Scripture Between Identity and Creativity: A Hermeneutical Theory Building upon Four Interpretations of Job* (Ars Disputandi Supplement Series, vol. 1; Utrecht: Ars Disputandi, 2003), 166-175.
“players who can interpret the text rightly in diverse situations; players who can stage the gospel, anywhere, anytime.”162 By attributing the church with the task of public interpretation, Vanhoozer consciously follows Lesslie Newbigin’s famous depiction of the church as an ‘hermeneutic of the gospel’.163 The ‘ministry’ of all Christians, in other words, is participating in the theo-drama by embodying Scripture in a diversity of contexts. We find that Vanhoozer locates the primary ministerial authority not first within the communal gathering, but first in the everyday lives of all Christians to authoritatively perform the gospel in the world.

Where Vanhoozer diverges most rigorously from Hauerwas, is his appropriation of the autopistia of Scripture to ensure that Scripture itself always contains the parameters for the church’s creative interpretation. The church is not to become a magisterial authority over Scripture, since “even interpreting communities can get it wrong.”164 Authoritative interpretation may therefore never be dependent on the majority rule.165 Vanhoozer directly interacts with Lindbeck and Hauerwas in his Drama of Doctrine. Lindbeck famously rehabilitated doctrine as the ‘grammar’ of the church’s faithful living, justified by the particular lexicon of its governing narrative.166 While appreciative toward Lindbeck—Vanhoozer wholeheartedly embraces the emphasis on the intelligibility of the gospel as a matter of faithful performance/embodiment—he nonetheless rejects his ‘cultural-linguistic approach’ which in his estimation subjected the authority of the Biblical text to the ‘cultural’ interpretation of the ecclesial community.167 When ecclesiology becomes ‘first theology’, theology itself is reduced to mere sociology: only capable of offering a description of a community’s speech about

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162 Vanhoozer, “The Voice and the Actor,” 104; also Drama of Doctrine, 413-414; and Faith Speaking Understanding, 36, 183-184.
164 Vanhoozer, Is There a Meaning in This Text?, 379. Cf. “Although the Bible alone has magisterial authority, the early catholic consensus has ministerial authority insofar as it displays biblical judgments. It thus provides pedagogical direction and an important opportunity for global theology to display catholic sensibility, a concern for doing theology in communion with the saints.” Vanhoozer, Faith Speaking Understanding, 201; also Drama of Doctrine, esp. 151-185.
166 See Lindbeck, The Nature of Doctrine, esp. 65-70, 129-134. It has to be said that Lindbeck’s own interaction is with those (“experiential expressivists”) who hold to a pluralist and inclusivist interpretation denying the particularity of Christianity’s claims, such as the belief in God’s earthly presence in Jesus Christ. Cf. Michener, Postliberal Theology, 137-139.
God. It is Vanhoozer’s firm conviction, however, that there is something in the nature of theology, and its subject ‘the gospel’, that can never be reduced to a mere local custom. Hence, what he calls his own ‘canonical linguistic approach’. In other words, the ‘turn to the local church’ should not be made at the expense of the authority of Scripture, as he thinks happens in Hauerwas’s argument. For it is around the magisterial authority of Scripture that the church gathers, which then authorizes the church to ‘minister’ authoritatively in the world. If magisterial authority, then, only belongs to Scripture, interpretation requires the “canonical competence” to ‘hear’ its meaning; the ability to discern how Scripture itself sets the tone for authoritative interpretation becomes a crucial element for ecclesial authority. Without advocating an individualist Bible-reading—the kind heavily criticized by Hauerwas—Vanhoozer recognizes the possibility of ‘able readers’, such as Martin Luther, to read Scripture against the tides of the interpretative community. If the church would have magisterial authority this would essentially bypass the possibility of prophetic correction, something which also Hauerwas calls for. But when authoritative interpretation equals the democratic majority opinion, than no interpretation can ever be criticized. Vanhoozer’s ‘sapiential theology’, conversely, seeks to sustain the church’s practical performance of the gospel by more emphatically recognizing Scripture’s critical function over against the community. Thus, ecclesial authoritative interpretation presumes the ‘sapient’ competence to let Scripture have its say in service of the church as hermeneutic of the gospel. For God, through Scripture, “initiates, sustains, and nourishes covenantal relations.” Of course, Vanhoozer risks making a circular argument, for the meaning of Scripture is only known through human interpretation. Even so, Vanhoozer’s argument must be read as a testimony of the theological conviction that the meaning of the Scriptural text is already in the text, and not automatically identical to the interpretation of its readers. Not every reading is equal and not every Christian’s interpretation is authoritative. In short, though discipleship may be essential to ministerial authority it is not the only prerequisite. Rather, to support the ministerial authority of every Christian in the world, there is need for able canonical readers within the church.

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168 See Vanhoozer, Drama of Doctrine, xiii, 6-7; 154ff; and First Theology, 220-227; cf. “Vanhoozer is not making a case against Lindbeck by simply refuting his (Lindbeck’s) critique of propositionalism, he is simply saying that Lindbeck’s critique fails to recognize the diversity and richness of how language operates using propositions.” Michener, Postliberal Theology, 137. See more elaborately Storer, Reading Scripture to Hear God, 106-116.

169 See Vanhoozer, Drama of Doctrine, 16; and “Scripture and Tradition,” 162.

170 See Vanhoozer, Faith Speaking Understanding, 197-198

171 See Vanhoozer, “The Voice and the Actor,” 80, 87; and Pictures at a Theological Exhibition, 57: “thus making it difficult to challenge the status quo with a prophetic ‘thus said the Lord.’” A similar critique toward Hauerwas is recently also made by Baan, The Necessity of Witness, 114-116, 187.

172 Cf. Vanhoozer, Is There a Meaning in This Text?, 371.

And so, the question remains, how do we know which interpretation is authoritative? And, specifically, with what kind of authority are ordained ministers to be clothed if Scripture is the supreme authority and the church by public performance its principal interpreter? There is an obvious tension in Vanhoozer’s argument on this point. He is fully aware that it is too easy to just cover the need for prophetic correction with a simple reference to the official ministry. For it is precisely the contemporary distrust of the clergy, often depicted as arrogant, stiff and megalomaniac figures, that make ministerial authority so controversial. It is a problem that is largely due to pastors’ themselves: pastors who seek to serve their career or status more than the fulfillment of vocation, those who speak for their own benefit more than they are willing to speak the truth. Yet, as Vanhoozer mentioned earlier, a pastor’s ‘success’ must be found in his decrease vise-à-vie his or her calling. Ministers should not get in the way of Scripture, for ministry is about becoming minus: “Here is the central paradox: the pastor is a public figure who must make himself as nothing, who must speak not to attract attention to himself but rather to point away from himself—unlike most contemporary celebrities.” Vanhoozer clearly challenges today’s common combination of authority and charismatic personality. For if a minister’s authority is dependent on personal characteristics, she or he basically has its main source of authority apart from Scripture, not unlike a sacerdotal view of ordination. The only way forward, argues Vanhoozer, is to explain ministerial authority in terms of ‘knowledge’: “To explain what contribution they make to the public good, pastors must either specify the kind of specialist knowledge they have or take up the mantle of the intellectual: one who claims a certain kind of intelligence and authority to speak about matters of general philosophical and social import (e.g., the meaning of life).” Vanhoozer opts for the minister as intellectual. Not that ministers have some special ‘religious sense’, or a certain degree of theological education, but they are ‘organic intellectuals’. An organic intellectual is not part of the upper-class intelligentsia secluded in an ivory tower, but someone who emerges from within a certain ‘group’ (in Latin: *populus*) as articulator of practical wisdom. Somebody who is able to

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176 Vanhoozer, “Introduction,” 13; also *Drama of Doctrine*, 441.
178 Cf. “The pastor-theologian does not have a unique professional or clinical skill but is rather the theological conscience of the church and thus understands everything in biblical-theological context in relation to what God is doing in Jesus Christ.” Vanhoozer, “In the Evangelical Mood,” 128.
180 “The organic intellectual is not a product of the Ivy League but homegrown, as it were, on the farm. Most important, the organic intellectual does not speak down on to people: The mode of being of the new intellectual can no longer consist in eloquence, which is an exterior and momentary mover of feelings and passions, but in active participation in practical life, as constructor, organizer, ‘permanent persuader,’ and not just a simple orator.” Vanhoozer, “Introduction,” 24. Earlier, Vanhoozer already spoke of the role of the theologian with regard to the interpretative community: Like the medieval minstrel, theologians should think of themselves as part of a performing troupe. The
speak theologically in a meaningful and truthful manner, that is: faithful to Scripture and perceptive of the world we live in.\(^{181}\) Thus, where the church's interpretative performance has primarily the world as its audience, the authority of ordained ministers is directed to church itself.

To further explicate this 'organic intelligence', Vanhoozer's return to his concept of sapiential theology. Accordingly, the authority of ordained ministers rests on their ability to lead the community into the practical wisdom of Scripture, in order to live a faithful understanding of the gospel. Vanhoozer specifies this kind of authority by using the term 'improvisation'. Improvisation appears regularly in Vanhoozer's writings and refers *grosso modo* to the contextual performance of the Scriptural directives in everyday life.\(^{182}\) Improvisation, as a term, denotes the coherence of speech and act that should mark the life of discipleship. It shows once more that the authoritative intellect required of ordained ministers is by essence not a merely a cerebral ability, but rather a sapiential competence to make good theological judgments: "The pastor-theologian is a special kind of generalist: a generalist who specializes in viewing all of life as relating to God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. Better: the pastor-theologian is an organic intellectual who is present as the mind of Christ, which animates the body of Christ."\(^{183}\) In this way, ministerial authority is not theological knowledge per se—although improvisation does require a degree of knowledge\(^{184}\)—but most of all a faithful ('fitting') understanding of the theo-drama that bridges Scripture to the contemporary situation. Understandably, when authority is limited to mere cognition of the content of Scripture, only the repetition of a locution such as 'was da steht' "(what is written") would be sufficient. But Scriptural interpretation is only completed when it lead s to fitting performance (illocution and perlocution). Moreover, when ministerial authority is explained by sapiential competence, which makes improvisation possible— it also invites participation. For improvisation thrives on the incorporation of human response, and as such, as Vanhoozer suggests, is covenantal.\(^{185}\) Ministerial authority by improvisation invites people into the performance of the theo-drama and thereby builds God's

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\(^{181}\) Vanhoozer, "Introduction," 22. The role of the ministry is according to Vanhoozer not restricted to the church alone, but extends to the academy and broader society. A minister therefore needs to be 'trilingual': speaking the languages of canon, culture, and humanity. See Vanhoozer, "Introduction," 4-5; "In the Evangelical Mood," 112-120; and elaborately in "What is Everyday Theology," 15-62.

\(^{182}\) See especially Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, 128-129, 335-344; and *Faith Speaking Understanding*, 188-198. An important inspiration for Vanhoozer’s use of the term is Samuel Wells’s book on ethics, *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2004), 12: "Improvisation is not about being spontaneous and witty in the moment, but about trusting oneself to do and say the obvious. The key to both ethics and improvisation is what the players regard as obvious and thus the real issues in both lie in the imagination."

\(^{183}\) Vanhoozer, "Introduction," 25; and "In the Evangelical Mood," 128.

\(^{184}\) "Improvisers thus need narrative skills". Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, 339.

covenantal community into a theatrical company of the gospel. Combining the idea of theology as dramaturgy with his concept of the pastor-theologian, he likens to illustrate ministerial authority with the authority of a dramaturge. It appears that ministerial authority is to be understood in terms of the church's theological improviser, someone who interprets Scripture on behalf of the theo-drama in view of their church's common participation in the theo-drama.

Before I come to my conclusion, I should mention that Vanhoozer carefully tries to curb his rather high view of ministerial authority by pointing to the humble attitude that should accompany this role. Significant is how he in Faith Speaking Understanding explains ordained ministry by way of the paradigm of 'the fool' in Shakespeare's King Lear: “The fool in Lear speaks truth but has no political power; the fool is not a king but a prophet who questions conventional wisdom.” In summary, ministerial authority is not matter of powerful personalities, but of obedient and accountable disciples who are able to serve their community with theological wisdom.

Our reading of Vanhoozer has helped us to further understand the controversy surrounding ministerial authority from the perspective of theological hermeneutics. In response to the 'hermeneutics of suspicion' that typifies present-day anti-authoritarian culture, he proposes to relate ministerial authority more consciously to both theological/hermeneutical competence and authentic discipleship. Authoritative Biblical interpretation is not characterized by force, but by obedience. It provides us with a viable direction to retrieve Browne’s Reformed/Puritan emphasis on practical divinity in view of the modern-day concern for authenticity. To affirm the possibility of prophetic speech, Vanhoozer counters Hauerwas’s bibliology ‘from below’ with a more explicit bibliology ‘from above’. Ministerial authority is there to serve Scripture’s magisterial authority over the church as authoritative witness. This obviously exposes a significant difference between Hauerwas and Vanhoozer. Whereas Hauerwas understands ministerial authority as an expression of the community’s allegiance to Scripture (‘communal power’), Vanhoozer presses us to see a minister’s authority as ‘canonical improvisation’ in order to ensure Scripture’s authority over the community. Considering also Hauerwas’s own concern for the shaping effect of the Scriptural story, Vanhoozer has a point. For how can these stories prophetically shape and challenge our lives, when its meaning is ultimately determined by the church itself?

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186 Vanhoozer, Faith Speaking Understanding, 19, 147.
188 This criticism has also been expressed by Ariaan Baan. He mentions it as one of Hauerwas’s shortcomings regarding an adequate understanding of the Spirit’s role in witness: “Faithful and truthful witnesses are those who distinguish themselves from others by remaining faithful to their oath and speaking the truth, even if their audience does not like what they have to say. . . . Arguably, Hauerwas himself often acts as ‘a prophetic individual,’ who is witnessing against the common sense of his Christian community.” Cf. Baan, The Necessity of Witness, 187.
Scripture, it surrenders the community to the human prison of the majority rule. Still, also Vanhoozer himself faces the question what happens when ordained ministry itself is in need of prophetic correction? And, moreover, who decides when lines are crossed?\textsuperscript{189} It seems that Vanhoozer, due to his emphasis on \textit{autopistia}, has more difficulty situating the Scriptures within the human frame of the church as its traditional and authoritative community of interpreters.\textsuperscript{190} On the other hand, by drawing on the concept of the communally embedded organic intellectual, he does want us to see ministerial authority as more than just ‘specialist advice’. This is why Vanhoozer distinguishes the ordained ministry as a ‘public’ ministry, something we also encountered in Browne’s literature. Of course, this invokes the question how \textit{autopistia} and organic intellectual relate. Nevertheless, according to Vanhoozer, a minister’s authoritative interpretation is an embodied form of practical wisdom, namely an accountable form of Biblical improvisation: the ability of involving the church into a contextual participation of the theo-drama. It seems that, in spite of their differences, both Vanhoozer and Hauerwas regard discipleship an essential part of ministerial authority. Obedience to Scripture, however, involves more than a simple repetition of the Scriptural texts, or dogmatic claims, for that matter.

4.4. Ordination and the Fear of Clericalism
The last point of controversy with which this chapter is concerned is the rite of ordination itself. As we have seen, Spurgeon simply denies the need for the ordination, arguing that ‘since nothing happened’ the rite was insignificant. Rather than ordination, he puts full weight on the minister’s personal holiness which he thought should exceed the average member (§ 1.6.2.), reminiscent of the ‘Donatist’ position we encountered in Browne. McClendon considers ordination a ‘left over’ of earlier awareness of the need for further spiritual growth now exclusively reserved for a clerical elite (§ 1.6.1.). In his view ordination represents an unbiblical distinction between two ‘classes’ of Christians, the laity and clergy. The only way back to the apostolic church, according to McClendon, is the ‘radical abolition of the laity’ by entirely disbanding its practice. The same fear of ‘clericalism’ (\textit{viz. ‘we are the church!’}) is also present in Volf’s concept of ordination (§ 1.6.3.). Every hint of clerical elevation or distinction on the side of ordained ministry

\textsuperscript{189} Hans Boersma therefore questions Vanhoozer’s idea of ‘teaching authority’ (\textit{magisterium}) within the church. Acknowledging the supreme normativity of Scripture is one thing, yet the immediate question is which ‘human’ authority may then decide on the ‘authoritative parameters’ Scripture supposedly sets? He writes: “We need the recognition, universal among the fathers, that the canon is the church’s canon, and that therefore the church and her \textit{magisterium} set authoritative parameters and make authoritative pronouncements about the interpretation of Scriptures and so about Christian doctrine.” Hans Boersma, “On Baking Pumpkin Pie: Kevin Vanhoozer and Yves Congar on Tradition,” \textit{CTJ} 42, no. 2 (2007): 254; also Storer, \textit{Reading Scripture to Hear God}, 144-146.

\textsuperscript{190} Cf. Spinks, \textit{The Bible and the Crisis of Meaning}, 96, 110-111. He challenges Vanhoozer’s either/or categorization that unnecessarily contrasts canon and community. For if ‘meaning’ is not a thing but action, can it be that Scripture’s communicative action continues within the community’s reception?
needs to be avoided. His own charismatic approach solves this by essentially describing ordination as a joint event in which the whole church receives the ‘charisma of office/the gift of leadership’ through an individual member. Like Spurgeon, Volf considers sacramentalism to be in conflict with the Spirit’s sovereignty. The ordination rite confirms a communal process instigated and controlled by the Spirit. Likewise, every member represents Christ insofar each person contributes according to his or her charisma. Volf, in the end, only allows for an ‘ordained status’ in a strictly functionalistic fashion: an ‘institutionalized charisma’ that provides continuity and unity to the church. His overall functionalism is further demonstrated by the fact that he limits the significance of ordination to the local church. Although Browne did recognize ordination in more than just functional terms, seeing his explicit connection with the ‘pre-given’ Christological charge and congregational reception, there is also some hesitation on his part in as much as the ‘laying on of hands’ could be associated with Roman ideas of the sacerdotal priesthood. It demonstrates the inherent tension between the ‘being’ and ‘doing’ of ordained ministry within the congregational tradition. On one part, ordained ministry may not be reduced to an ‘ecclesial employee’, as it would reduce to a human action and thereby neglect its character as a Christological gift. On another, a minister’s ordination cannot be detached from the life of discipleship amidst the congregation. To find further directions, it is necessary to turn one more time to Hauerwas’s and Vanhoozer’s respective understanding of the character of ordination and its significance for the ministerial life.

4.4.1. Stanley Hauerwas: A Sacramental Charge to Moral Character

References to ordination are found across the spectrum of Hauerwas’s work. In one particular article—called “Clerical Character”—that was included in Christian Existence Today, he specifically discusses the ethical tension between moral behavior and ordination. As he does more often, Hauerwas argues his own case by opposing both fundamentalists and liberals. Fundamentalists tend to treat the minister as a sort of moral standard of Christian life. What is required of every Christian is “just ‘more so’ for the ministry.” Hauerwas is troubled by the Donatist disposition that lies behind this type of thought, as he writes in the opening statement of his essay:

Donatism dies hard. As with most heresies its mutations seem endless. Indeed, the expectations of Protestant congregations about the kind of life their ministers should have is now the natural home of Donatism. It seems that the less Protestants appreciate the sacerdotal functions of the ministry, the more they expect their clergy to conform to an uncompromising moral ideal. Having little sense that ordination involves any intrinsic character and set of

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191 Hauerwas, Christian Existence Today, 133.
responsibilities, Protestants, it almost seems, find it necessary to find some special role that justifies identifying some as ministers.¹⁹²

Fundamentalists—at least according to Hauerwas—may deny a sacerdotal character to the ministry, yet they tie the special character to the minister’s exemplary morality. On the other end of the Protestant spectrum, the liberal camp, he observes a total disconnection between ethics and ordained ministry. Liberals even deny all differences between clergy and laity and dismissed the minister’s from having any moral obligation.¹⁹³ What ‘makes’ the ministry is a certain level of professionalism. Ministers are ‘professional Christians’ who deliver some professional services to the church. While the depiction of Hauerwas does remind of a false dilemma, it is not so much intended as a full rejection of both views, as well as to denote two fallacies that need to be avoided. To do this, Hauerwas uses his familiar terminology of character in both an ethical and in a sacramental way. With Hauerwas, specific attention should be paid to his exchange of ‘sacerdotal’ for the term ‘sacramental’. His main argument is that the moral expectancy toward ordained ministers should not be approached from the area of command-ethics, but from the perspective of character-ethics: “It is not enough, in other words, that those called to the ministry refrain from or do certain things; it is necessary that they be the kind of persons that have the character to sustain them in the ministry.”¹⁹⁴ It is the same question we noticed earlier in relation to the church (see § 4.2.1). Likewise, he argues that the ‘official’ character of ministry should not be found in the language of professionalism, but in sacramental theology.¹⁹⁵ It is particularly for this reason that Hauerwas attributes the present ministerial crisis to a lack of fitting appreciation for the sacramental character of ordination. Churches rather make their appreciation dependent on the personal characteristics of the specific minister. Hauerwas only sees a way forward if churches reconnect their moral expectancies with a sacramental understanding of ordination. The language of power, as observed earlier in the thought of Hauerwas, now receives a sacramental imbedding: “Ordination bestows on the ministers a power that not all in the church possess—e.g., they alone can preside at the eucharist. To possess such power requires them to have the character sufficient for that task as well as to protect them and

¹⁹³ Cf. “Better for the clergy and the laity to say what we have known all along—namely, there is no difference between the clergy and anyone else. Some ministers’ marriages will fail, some will be ambitious, some will be less than forgiving, some will even be less than honest, especially when their self-interest is involved, but that does not mean they are disqualified from the ministry.” Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 134.
¹⁹⁵ Hauerwas encountered sacramental theology during his days at the Roman-Catholic University of Notre Dame: “You do not spend fourteen years with the Catholics at Notre Dame without being marked by that experience” (see *In Good Company*, 11). According to William Cavanaugh, Hauerwas came to appreciate the objective realism of sacramentalism more than the Methodist emphasis on the individualist subjectivity of religious experience, in which he was raised (see Cavanaugh, “Stan the Man,” 23).
the church from abuse of that power.” Similar words can be found in *Resident Aliens.*

Yet here he strongly refuses any division between clergy and laity, when he writes that clergy have no special possession, no special gift, or *character indelebilis* that suggest that they “are the only real ministers and that the laity exist only to support and feed these real ministers.” One way to understand these paradoxical claims is to take into account that Hauerwas’ recognition of sacramentalism is aimed to balance the moral expectancy toward the ministry, and that his denial of some special trait to the ministry is aimed to avoid that genuine ministry is restricted to the ordained ministry. Hence, sacramentalism does not separate between who is ‘in ministry’ and who is not, as noted above (§ 4.2.1.), but rather appoints those who have been entrusted with the particular ministry of “building up a congregation.” The moral character expected from this kind of ministry, therefore, cannot be viewed independently from the special role they have within the church as preachers of the Word and administrators of the sacraments. The way Hauerwas attempts to avoid the challenge of Donatism is by making morality not a requirement that sustains ordination, but a charge that flows from ordination. Which means that a minister answers his ordination by developing a certain character. As such, ministers are ordained to be a certain kind of character within the ‘community of character’.

Behind Hauerwas’ adoption of sacramental theology lies his well-known difficulty with sentimentalism. The sentimental tendencies in Western culture have made the ministry dependent on human preferences and needs. Sacramental theology, on the other hand, locates the special role of the ordained ministry in “the power the minister has been given to perform the rites of the church for the church.” As already noticed (§ 4.3.1.), For Hauerwas the language of power does not carry the connotation of coercion or violence. He more or less tries to correct prevalent views that describe ministers as specially endowed with certain gifts (*charismata*), which are not available for the rest of the congregation. By using ‘power’ as a discriminatory category, Hauerwas aims to distinguish ordination from the distribution of charismatic gifts. Ordination is not dependent on the particular abilities of the person in question, but ordination is an ‘empowerment’ by the church itself: “in ordination the church puts some of its folk under orders; it makes them official ‘community people’.” Ordained ministers are thus representatives of the community. This fits with Hauerwas’s earlier understanding of

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197 “A Christian pastor is a powerful person because only the pastor has been given the authority to serve the eucharist and to preach the Word for the church.” Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 167.
ministerial authority as derivative of the community’s authority. The often used
designator ‘set apart’ is not to be understood to underwrite the minister’s independency,
but precisely his or her communitarian embedding: “The ministry is set apart and
identified with specific persons not because it involves matters reserved to the minister
or priest, but because those activities that characterize the ministry are properly activities
of the whole church.”203 Thus far, it has become evident that Hauerwas understands
ordination as the ecclesial investment of a person with the power to perform the crucial
acts of the church, such as the proclamation of the word, baptizing, and preside at the
eucharist, on behalf, and before, the whole community.

With his outspoken preference for a sacramental understanding of ordination
Hauerwas aims to correct the present-day focus on professionalism, which is to him just
another form of Constantinianism.204 Yet ordained ministry is not first a service to meet
people’s needs but God’s calling to a certain character: “for only by being initiated by a
master do we gain some idea of the kind of people we need to be to be capable of
judgments.”205 We already encountered a similar analogy while discussing Hauerwas’s
concept of authority (see § 4.3.1.). While ordination involves a sacramental
empowerment, ordained ministry also requires adequate training. Talent and
intelligence are not unimportant, yet they find their destiny only in a person whose
character is shaped in such a way that he or she is capable of sustaining their particular
responsibility to God and the community: “Ministers are not ‘better’ than any other
Christian, but they have made themselves open to a call from others that may well make
them different.”206 Ordination calls for a character that meets the powers associated with
the ‘order’ into which a person in placed. Hauerwas is well aware of the thin line between
his view and those associated with Donatism. The difference is that he does not deny
God’s use of moral questionable ministers, but only stresses that the ministry includes a
charge to a certain morality: “while God’s grace can be found through the most unlikely
servants, it is nonetheless the case that the ministry is sustained by those who have
learned that the very ability to be faithful ministers of God’s church requires character.”207
Ordination is not only an instantaneous event impressing clerical character, but also a
charge to embody the clerical character in a moral sense. Rather than concentrating on
the absence of certain immoral actions, the focus should be on the presence of skills, like
patience, hope, constancy and joy. These skills make ministers “a sign of God’s
faithfulness to the church.”208 Precisely for that reason ordination should not be carried

204 “to be part social worker, part counselor, good with young people, an engaging speaker, fair administrator,
moral exemplar without being judgmental, and a host of other functions and characteristics.” Hauerwas, Christian
Existence Today, 136.
205 Hauerwas, Christian Existence Today, 141.
206 Hauerwas, Christian Existence Today, 142.
207 Hauerwas, Christian Existence Today, 142.
208 Hauerwas, Christian Existence Today, 143.
out lightly: “it is important that those whom the church calls to be our officials be carefully examined and tested, for we must know them capable of becoming people of character even if such character is only beginning to be developed as they enter the ministry.”

In a more recent collection of sermons *Cross-Shattered Church* (2009), Hauerwas’s thought manifests an even stronger sense of sacramental theology. In a sermon, preached during the ordination service of Grace Hackney, a sacramental view on ordination forms the central argument. He even employs the terminology of priesthood. On which point Hauerwas precisely adopted this language is difficult to establish. It seems that he has grown slowly into a more ‘high church-vocabulary’ to explain his theology of ordained ministry. After drawing an explicit line between the anointing of David (1 Sam. 16:13) and the ordination to ministry, Hauerwas states:

Accordingly Grace has been set aside by the laying on of hands to do for the church what only the whole church can do. She has been given the power to be for us Christ by presiding at the meal in which we become participants in Christ’s sacrifice. Grace has been ordained to represent for us Christ’s priesthood, through which we are made participants and witnesses to his sacrifice.

These words correspond with Hauerwas’s earlier thoughts. The minister is to be for the church what the church is for the world. It is significant that the Biblical story of the anointing of David convinced him to no longer use the language of leadership to address the distinctiveness of ordination: “if we have ordained Grace to be a ‘leader’ then we are no better than the people of Israel, who desired a king in order to be like other nations. Grace has not been ordained to be a leader. Grace has been ordained to be for us a priest representing Christ’s priesthood.” Hauerwas’s adoption of sacramental theology is again put in contrast with functionalistic terminology. ‘Leadership’ still assumes some qualities of the person in question. But ordination ‘bestows’ a person with the power and

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210 Significant are Hauerwas’s comments in his preface regarding the book’s dedication: “I dedicate this book to these bishops, whose office is the office of unity, in the hope that through faithful preaching of the Word we will be united at the table prepared for us by Jesus.” *A Cross-Shattered Church: Reclaiming the Theological Heart of Preaching* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, [2009], 2010), 10.
211 See Stanley Hauerwas, “Anointing Grace: A Sermon in Celebrating the Ordination of Grace Hackney,” in *Cross-Shattered Church*, 128-133. It is noteworthy, however, that Hauerwas always refrained from becoming a Roman-Catholic since the Roman-Catholic Church does not recognize the priesthood of his wife Paula Gilbert, who serves as a Methodist minister in an Episcopal church: “And yet Hauerwas claims that he cannot become Catholic as long as the Catholic Church will not recognize Paula’s priesthood, which he says he has seen with his own eyes. Confounding the issue is the fact that Stanley’s position would make Paula the only Methodist priest. Methodists do not believe in the ministerial priesthood; Stanley does.” See Cavanaugh, “Stan the Man,” 24.
212 Hauerwas, *Cross-Shattered Church*, 131.
213 Hauerwas, *Cross-Shattered Church*, 132.
makes a person into a priest, to be “God’s anointed” and reflection of the priesthood of Christ, the high priest.\footnote{Hauerwas, \textit{Cross-Shattered Church}, 132-133.} In this fashion, though without naming Ephesians 4:11, Hauerwas speaks of ordination as a gift to the specific person and to the church. An important question, of course, is how this seemingly ontological way of describing the significance of ordination in his more recent work coheres with, for example, \textit{Resident Aliens}?\footnote{It would appear, at least, that Hauerwas moved closer to a Catholic position during his life. In one of his most recent works he writes about his ecclesiological position in a footnote: “My general position reflects my free church commitments combined with a Catholic understanding of the priesthood under a bishop” (\textit{The Work of Theology}, 103 n2). Although Hauerwas does not further explicate his precise theology of the bishop’s office, it is a returning element (cf. \textit{The State of the University}, 144-145; and Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, “Why Resident Aliens Struck a Chord,” in \textit{In Good Company}, 62).}

To answer this question, another word needs to be said about the powers with which Hauerwas associates the act of ordination so predominantly: Word and sacraments. Specifically in \textit{Resident Aliens}, Hauerwas puts these ‘doxological’ practices over against the powers of choice, democracy, violence and the nation-state,\footnote{See \textit{Lumen Gentium}, trans. National Catholic Welfare Conference (Documents of Vatican II; Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1965), 21: “The ministerial priest, by the sacred power he enjoys, teaches and rules the priestly people; acting in the person of Christ, he makes present the Eucharistic sacrifice, and offers it to God in the name of all the people.”} as the main content of the character of the ordained ministry in a post-Christendom context:

Clergy must not assume that their disempowerment by the culture means that they have no power. A Christian pastor is a powerful person because only the pastor has been given the authority to serve the eucharist and to preach the Word for the church—to point to the very presence of God among us. That is power.\footnote{Hauerwas and Willimon, \textit{Resident Aliens}, esp. 30-48, 62.}

Hauerwas’s identification of ordination with the powers of Word and sacraments resembles the \textit{sacra potestas} in Roman-Catholicism.\footnote{See \textit{Lumen Gentium}, trans. National Catholic Welfare Conference (Documents of Vatican II; Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1965), 21: “The ministerial priest, by the sacred power he enjoys, teaches and rules the priestly people; acting in the person of Christ, he makes present the Eucharistic sacrifice, and offers it to God in the name of all the people.”} The eucharist and the Word preached, together with discipline, form the ‘marks of the church’ that constitute the church into an alternative polis.\footnote{Cf. “Thus the church is known where the sacraments are celebrated, the word is preached, and upright lives are encouraged and lived.” Hauerwas, \textit{Peaceable Kingdom}, 107. Many times does Hauerwas refer to the truth-telling importance of the sacraments, especially the eucharist, as the visible practices by which the church is trained into own governing story of the Lordship of Jesus (see also \textit{Resident Aliens}, 167-170; \textit{Dispatches From the Front}, 112-113, 175, 182; \textit{Christian Existence Today}, 161; \textit{A Better Hope}, 159; and \textit{War and American Difference}, 69). It is unclear how the ordained ministry relates to the exercise of discipline. Though Hauerwas sometimes seem to suggest a special responsibility for the ministry in these matters (see \textit{Resident Aliens}, 168), in other places this seems to be more a communal responsibility (see \textit{War and the American Difference}, 179).} By these practices ordained ministers exercise their
prophetic authority and sustain the church in their missionary identity as a social ethic.\footnote{This does not mean, of course, that Hauerwas limits the prophetic task to Word and sacraments, but they do represent the most significant expressions of the Christian story. Not coincidentally, it is within the context of an extensive explanation of preaching that Hauerwas himself confesses not to be ordained thereto himself, but that he is entrusted to do so by the ‘appropriate authorities’. In the elaborate theological exposition on preaching, included in \textit{Cross-Shattered Church}, he writes: “I am convinced that the recovery of the sermon as the context for theological reflection is crucial if Christians are to negotiate the world in which we find ourselves.” To Hauerwas, preaching is the primary manifestation of the ‘task of interpretation’ by which the ordained ministry invites people, both Christian and non-Christian, to locate their story in God’s story. Much like Israel’s offices of prophet, king and priest, once. As such, the basic theological task of the ordained ministry is “working with words” or “word care,” as Hauerwas repeats Yoder. The necessity of the sermon is thus tied to the nature of the church being a ‘story-formed community’. Though the work of the Spirit, at least until now has not played, a big role in our analysis of Hauerwas’s thought, he must definitely recognize the Spirit’s essential role in shaping the church to be an adequate witness: “Rather, for the preached word to be God’s word the Holy Spirit must make us a body of people capable of hearing that word rightly.” For Hauerwas the Spirit’s work is always tied to the nature of the church being a ‘story-formed community’. Though the work of the Spirit, at least until now has not played, a big role in our analysis of Hauerwas’s thought, he must definitely recognize the Spirit’s essential role in shaping the church to be an adequate witness: “Rather, for the preached word to be God’s word the Holy Spirit must make us a body of people capable of hearing that word rightly.”}

\footnote{“If the church is rather than has a social ethic, these actions are our most important social witness. It is in baptism and eucharist that we see most clearly the marks of God’s kingdom in the world. They set out the standard, as we try to bring every aspect of our lives under their sway.” Hauerwas, \textit{Peaceable Kingdom}, 108.}

\footnote{See Hauerwas, \textit{Christian Existence Today}, 162.}

\footnote{Cf. “There is, moreover, the problem of my ecclesial status. I am not ordained. And, as I suggested above, being a theologian in our day does not mean that you should be trusted with God’s Word. I am therefore extremely grateful, therefore, that I am judged worthy and trusted by appropriate authorities to preach.” Hauerwas, \textit{Cross-Shattered Church}, 20. Many of his sermons are published (see for example \textit{Unleashing the Scripture}, 47-148; \textit{The Cross-Shattered Christ: Meditations on the Seven Last Words} [Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2004]; \textit{Cross-Shattered Church}, 27-133; and \textit{Without Apology}). He uses sermons to illustrate his theology and to connect his theology to the life of the church (see for example \textit{Sanctify Them in the Truth}, 168-173, 235ff). It is significant, therefore, that the editor of a collection of essays celebrating Hauerwas’s retirement from full-time teaching at Duke University, also included Hauerwas’s sermon preached during the same occasion. See Stanley Hauerwas, “A Homily on All Saints,” in \textit{The Difference Christ Makes: Celebrating the Life, Work, and Friendship of Stanley Hauerwas}, ed. Charles M. Collier (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2015), 1-3.}

\footnote{Hauerwas, \textit{Cross-Shattered Church}, 12.}

\footnote{Cf. “Therefore the task of Israel, indeed the very thing that makes Israel Israel, is to walk in the way of the Lord, that is, to imitate God through the means of the prophet (Torah), the king (Sonship), and the priest (Knowledge).” Hauerwas, \textit{The Peaceable Kingdom}, 77, see esp. 76-78.}

\footnote{Hauerwas, \textit{Cross-Shattered Church}, 17-18.}

\footnote{Hauerwas, \textit{Christian Existence Today}, 60. Hauerwas’s ‘undeveloped’ pneumatology has been a frequent point of criticism (see Wells, \textit{Transforming Fate into Destiny}, 98-98; and Thomson, \textit{The Ecclesiology of Stanley Hauerwas}, 214-215; and Hauerwas’s response “How the Holy Spirit Works,” in \textit{The Work of Theology}, 32-52). Though Hauerwas does mention the role of the Holy Spirit quite regularly (cf. Baan, \textit{The Necessity of Witness}, esp. 182-207), it is mainly in light of his Christology—presumably to prevent pneumatology from being abstracted to a ‘free-floating agency’ apart from the events that make up the story of Jesus (cf. Rasmusson, \textit{The Church as Polis}, 179-180; and Hauerwas, \textit{The Work of Theology}, 32-40). In 2015 he published a booklet, written together with Willimon, offering a more elaborate and structured view upon the Holy Spirit. But even here, his understanding of the work of the Spirit is intimately dependent on Christology, 255}
intimately connected to the story of Jesus and the practices of the church. In *Working with Words* (2011), he depicts the role of the ordained ministry (or clergy) correspondingly as the teacher who is called to learn the church ‘to speak Christian’:227

The sermon is at the heart of our ability to speak as well as sustain Christian. The sermon is not your reflections on how to negotiate life. The sermon rather is our fundamental speech act as Christians through which we learn the grammar of the faith. As my colleague, Richard Lischer, put it in his book *The End of Words*, ‘the preacher’s job . . . is to do nothing less than shape the language of the sermon to a living reality among the people of God—to make it conform to Jesus. The sermon, in fact is Jesus trying to speak once again in his own community.’228

This does not mean that Hauerwas understands Word and sacraments as the sole property of the ordained ministry. To him, they are first and foremost gifts to the church: “The sermon is a churchly event.”229 But the church ‘ordains’ some to act on their behalf and bear the burden of the ministerial character: “to be a person morally capable of exercising the awesome power of Word and Sacrament.”230

In conclusion, we note that Hauerwas is an outspoken example of those theologians who have reconnected with sacramental theology in response to functionalistic interpretations and avoid the threat of Donatism. It is an attempt to connect with the church’s ‘own’ ministerial vocabulary in order to correct the contemporary use of professional and functionalistic concepts, which he views as mere Constantinianism. To Hauerwas ordination is both an actual bestowal of power as well as a moral charge, an indicative and an imperative. Ordained ministry is indeed ‘a way of being and doing’. It seems that Hauerwas’s linkage of the sacramental and the moral character are to keep the ministry from falling either into the pit of sacerdotalism or Donatism. Hauerwas furthermore urges us to see ministerial power in the concrete liturgical practices of the church, that are the most significant exhibitions of the story of Jesus, Word and sacraments. As such, an ordained minister is a priest, representing Christ’s priesthood on behalf of the church. Moreover, it means that the character of ordination, though an act of the church, is predetermined. Much like Browne, Hauerwas

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228 Hauerwas, *Working with Words*, 93; cf. “Rather, I am suggesting that it is the task of those committed to the theological enterprise to develop the linguistic skills that can help congregations understand better the common but no less theologically significant activities which constitute their lives.” Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 123.

229 Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 60; also *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 106-111.

recognizes that the tasks to which people are ordained should not be dependent on the
sentiments of time, but are rooted in Christ’s charge to ‘teach’ the church the language of
the Christian faith by Word and sacraments. Yet, Hauerwas’s tempting proposal is not
without its own problems. First of all, it cannot be denied that there is a certain tension
between Hauerwas’s approach to ministerial authority and his understanding of
ordination: ordination conveys a certain power regardless of a person’s competencies,
while earlier ministerial authority was acquired by training and skills. Secondly, it seems
that in the end, Hauerwas’s proposal lacks the theological means to explain how the
sacramental character of ordained ministry coheres with the communal dimension:
What if ordained ministers fail morally?231

4.4.2. Kevin Vanhoozer: The Drama of Ordination

Different from Hauerwas—in whose ‘high church’ vocabulary ordination appears
regularly—Vanhoozer is much more silent on this subject. In The Pastor as Public
Theologian only one explicit reference is made: “the pastor’s distinct office is to serve
others by building them up into Christ through the ministry of Word and sacrament in
particular. Ordination means that a person is set apart for a special purpose, namely, for
special service in the house of God.”232 Like Hauerwas, Vanhoozer relates the significance
of ordination directly to the liturgical practices of Word and sacraments. People are
‘ordained/set apart’ to be ‘ministers of the Word’, or ‘prophets’, within the theo-dramatic
community.233 Yet, where Hauerwas couples ordination with sacramental theology,
Vanhoozer seeks to connect ordination more functionally to specific ‘practices’. It
corresponds to his general working theory that ‘being’ (or authenticity) is realized in
‘doing’: “Everything that exists communicates what it is (essence) simply by being what
it is (i.e., acting in character).”234 As such, he understands the character of ordination as
a specific performance/role, corresponding to his theo-dramatic concept of ordained
ministry we observed earlier (§ 4.2.2.). As a result—like the nature of the church itself—
also the character of ordination is ‘dramatic’. Ordained ministers are ‘in character’ when
they speak theological understanding. Even though Vanhoozer does not specifically use
the term for ordained ministry, it would not be wrong to explain his apprehension of the

231 Cf. Baan, The Necessity of Witness, 120: ‘I think that perhaps one of the most important lessons that the
master much teach is the awareness that he and his trainees remain susceptible to untruthfulness and unfaithfulness. If a
master fails to mention this, then his training could become an obstacle to seeing the world as it is. This training will create
proud witnesses who do not witness of the world’s contingency but of their own overconfidence.” John Thomson also
refers to Hauerwas’s underdeveloped sacramentology, see his The Ecclesiology of Stanley Hauerwas, 213.


233 See Vanhoozer, Faith Speaking Understanding, 104.

234 Vanhoozer, Faith Speaking Understanding, 67. See for an elaborate explanation chapter 4 “God’s Being is
in Communicating,” in Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion and Authorship (Cambridge
of mediation of grace is intentionally replaced by language of ‘imitation’ and ‘signification’ of grace to stress the church’s
responsive role.” Storer, Reading Scripture to Hear God, 108.
role of the ordained character in terms of a ‘speech agent’: someone whose being is acted out in speech. In short, by explaining ordination as a ‘charge to act’ in a particular way, Vanhoozer rises above the present conflict between ‘being’ and ‘doing’ wherein the current debate about ordination has bogged down.

To further explain in which particular acts the ‘drama of ordination’ is acted out, Vanhoozer lists four practices loosely related to Ephesians 4:11: the evangelist, the catechist, the liturgist and the apologist. What joins these four together is that all are aimed at the performance of the whole church, for “[p]astors exist to edify people in Christ.” He cannot but make the important caveat that ministers do not serve the church by attending people’s needs, but by enabling disciples to meet the needed conformity to Christ. The first practice/role, the evangelist, stands above all others as the public form of ‘communicating’ the theo-drama. As it is used here by Vanhoozer, evangelism is not a general proclamation of the gospel to non-Christians, but more ecclesiastically bound: drawing people into the gospel. This includes visitations and conversations, but finds its most significant expression in preaching: “The sermon is not the exclusive form of one’s ministry of the word, but preaching is nevertheless the pastor-theologian’s most characteristic practice, and one of the most important. Preaching is not the whole of the pastoral ministry, but it is its microcosm: as the sermon goes, so goes the holy nation.” Preaching forms the heart of the character of ordination since it is the clearest performance of ‘speaking Christian’. In a sermon, the minister explains the theo-drama in the concrete context of the local church in order to further their practical understanding of what it means to participate in the theo-drama. Therefore preaching is not some outdated form of communication, nor a means of entertainment, but an essential tool especially in a post-Christendom situation, as “a powerful means to discern, and then cast down, the idols of our time.”

235 “Speaking Christian is a matter of faith speaking understanding, of theology articulated.” Vanhoozer, *Faith Speaking Understanding*, 17. ‘Speech agent’ is a term Vanhoozer uses throughout his literature to describe: 1. the common human nature to seek social interaction with its environment (see *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 387); 2. the role of prophets in the Old Testament (see *Drama of Doctrine*, 51); 3. God himself (see *Drama of Doctrine*, 63, 177; and *Remythologizing Theology*, 23-24); and 4. the God incarnate Jesus (see *Remythologizing Theology*, 238).

236 Vanhoozer, “Artisans in the House of God,” 142. He also relates this to Christ’s call ‘feed my sheep’ (Joh. 21:7). To ground his ministerial theology further in Scripture, Vanhoozer draws on the Biblical examples of Ezra and Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians, which according enlighten the public role that characterizes the ordained ministry. Ezra, in the search for covenantal faithfulness to God, sought not only to rebuild the temple as physical sign of God’s covenantal presence, but first and foremost the restoration of Israel as a holy people. Likewise, Paul operated as ‘public theologian’ when he ministered the Word to build up the church of Ephesus as a spiritual house of God.

237 Vanhoozer, “Artisans in the House of God,” 156; *Faith Speaking Understanding*, 131: “Indeed, the preacher’s raison d’être is to minister the word, that is, to minister greater understanding of the faith to people of faith and to move them toward the obedience of faith.” Likewise in Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, 74: “The ministry of the Word extends beyond preaching, but preaching captures what is most important. To preach is to address people in God’s name, an address ‘directed to men with the definitive claim and expectation that it has to declare the Word of God to them’. This is precisely why preaching ought to be an exposition of Scripture, the objective or written form of God’s Word.”

238 Vanhoozer, “Artisans in the House of God,” 158. Considering the crucial importance of prophetic preaching in post-Christendom Vanhoozer explains the confusion surrounding ordained ministry partly to a loss of adequate
reminds people to confront the fake realities of this world and ‘organize’ their lives around the rule of Christ. Vanhoozer explicitly counters the frequent assumption that understands preaching as a solitary act of the minister. Rather, preaching is a prophetic act of the whole community, as it seeks a ‘dramatic improvisation’ in the daily life of every listener: “Preachers should persuade their congregations both to assent to Christian doctrine and to act it out.” 239 Right preaching, therefore, involves both speaker and listener and both speaking and listening. It shows once again how Vanhoozer connects the ordained ministry to the mission of the church itself; the prophetic character of ordination serves the prophetic witness of the church in the world. 240 What is more interesting, certainly with regard to Vanhoozer’s overall emphasis on practices, is his sudden use of sacramental vocabulary to ‘characterize’ the act of preaching:

What sets Christian preaching apart from every other form of human communication is its participation in what is ultimately triune activity: preaching is distinguished by its authoritative source (Scripture, the Word of God), unique content (gospel, what is in Christ), and unique persuasive power (illumination, the work of the Spirit). Preaching is a means of grace because it communicates the one who is ‘full of grace and truth’ (John 1:14). 241

By understanding preaching as an actual means of grace, such preaching is not only a reference to the theo-drama—describing what God has done—but a divine act itself: through the words of the preacher God’s Spirit cultivates people into Christlikeness, 242 and confirms his covenantal relationship with the church. 243 Vanhoozer’s choice of words is significant on this point. They further reveal where he differs from Hauerwas. Ordination does not make the minister personally into a means of grace, but set her or him apart to perform sacramental acts. 244 Not in persona, as it were, but in sermo: “When pastor-theologians proclaim the gospel, they participate in Christ’s own prophetic office.” 245 Vanhoozer clearly aims to understand the minister’s special role in terms of

preaching: “many pastors do not even try, preferring rather to entertain, tell uplifting and funny stories, share their own experience, and offer vague moral and spiritual platitudes that are no more objectionable than the well-meaning sentiments of a Hallmark card.” (156).

239 Vanhoozer, Faith Speaking Understanding, 183; also Drama of Doctrine, 421: “doing the truth is essentially prohetic, for the truth of the gospel is ultimately not of this world.”

240 Cf. “The church becomes deadly theater when it loses its prophetic edge or when members become passive spectators who feel no call to become participants.” Vanhoozer, Drama of Doctrine, 403, also 427–428.

241 Vanhoozer, “Artisans in the House of God,” 157. Cf. “What sets Christian preaching apart from every other form of discourse is not only its authoritative source (Scripture) and unique content (gospel), but also its function as primary means by which God’s word cultivates Christ in the believer.” Vanhoozer, Faith Speaking Understanding, 131.


244 Not coincidently he refers to the transcendent potential of the Scriptural text in terms of “real presence.” Vanhoozer, Is There a Meaning in This Text?, 395.

drama (acting ‘in Christ’s character’), and thus, when ministers preach they represent Christ.

The second role is the catechist, by which an ordained minister trains the people to be lively interpreters and performers of the gospel. According to Vanhoozer, the hyphenation of ‘pastor and teacher’ in Ephesians 4:11 suggests an overlap between these roles: “All pastors teach, . . . but not all teachers are also pastors.”246 Significant is his reference to Calvin on this point, to justify his interpretation of teacher with the ‘academic doctor’. Though Vanhoozer thereby recovers the possibility of interpreting ‘pastor and teacher’ as two different offices, like Browne directs us, the latter of the two primary places of ministry is ‘outside’ the local church. It seems Vanhoozer only allows for two options: either the one office of the pastor-theologian, or two offices, the local pastor and the academic doctor. Anyhow, through instructing ‘catechesis’ ordained ministers enable members to become ministers in their daily lives. This is even more manifest in the role of liturgist. Through the liturgy, ministers enable the congregation to actually celebrate their existence in Christ. He criticizes contemporary tendencies to leave worship to (professional) musicians: “For worship is the quintessential theological act.”247 Through worship the church becomes the church, the embodied drama (cf. Mat. 18:20).248 At the center of the church’s worship, we find according to Vanhoozer the celebration of communion: “arguably the most appropriate use yet of our signature phrase: celebrating the Lord’s Supper is a quintessential public theological act.”249 Similar to Hauerwas, Vanhoozer places communion in the center of the local church and thereby in the center of the ministerial practices as a “visceral summary of the whole drama of redemption.”250 Where the sermon aims to draw people into the theo-drama, the Lord’s Supper reenacts what the drama is all about and offers people a glimpse (“taste”) of the recreated order.251 Thus, by administrating the Lord’s Supper a minister enacts the reality of the theo-drama in the midst of the church. Reminiscent of Hauerwas’s famous expression, Vanhoozer writes, “[t]he church is public theology when it embodies the new humanity that exists in Christ, in whom there are no racial, social or economic

248 See Vanhoozer, “Artisans in the House of God,” 166: “In the first place, God is graciously active and present in worship, communicating Christ in Scripture, sermon, son, and sacrament. At the same time, the church’s worship participates in Christ’s prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices through preaching (truth-telling), praying (interceding), and praising (singing).”
249 Vanhoozer, “Artisans in the House of God,” 171. The Lord’s Supper embodies to Vanhoozer the “the summa of the gospel” and it is the most continual and condensed summary of the drama of redemption presided by the Lord Jesus himself. Interestingly, Vanhoozer also describes the Lord’s Supper as a covenant-renewal meal, by which people are rejoined into the covenantal life of the the-drama, in a real (‘already’) anticipation of the coming (‘not yet’) ‘marriage supper of the Lamb’ (see Faith Speaking Understanding, 160-166). He therefore calls for a weekly celebration, since pastors are responsible to “mine the theological riches of the Lord’s Supper, perhaps by celebrating on a weekly basis.” See Vanhoozer, “Artisans in the House of God,” 173.
division.” The centrality of preaching and the Lord’s Supper shows why Vanhoozer uses the classic nomenclature of ‘ministry of Word and sacrament.’ The preached Word and the sacraments are the dominant performances (“holy props”)—in correspondence with the ‘holy prompts’ of Word and Spirit—in which the church acts out its theo-dramatic identity. These are, therefore, the primal performances in which the dramatic character of ordained is acted out. Though explicit sacramentalism is absent in Vanhoozer’s description of the Lord’s Supper, there is a coherence with preaching that may perhaps suggest otherwise. The fourth and last practice Vanhoozer mentions, is the role of apologist. Though addressed separately, it is quite frankly not more than a derivative form of both the evangelist and catechist, now more specifically oriented toward exposing false teachings, in order to maintain a faithful and credible witness. Yet, the best apologetics, writes Vanhoozer consistent with Hauerwas, is the church itself as an embodied witness of the drama: “The gathered assembly of believers is the practical demonstration of the wisdom of the cross and of the risen Christ’s lordship.”

Observing the considerable attention for the ministerial practices, it is curious to notice that Vanhoozer nowhere deals explicitly with the relation between the ministerial vocation and moral life. The absence could imply that Vanhoozer refuses to make any differences in moral expectancies toward ordained ministry and other Christians. Only in The Pastor as Public Theologian he briefly addresses the tension between a Christian’s vocation and morality. While every Christian received the gift of ‘being within Christ’ (indicative), they are also encouraged to correspond to ‘what is in Christ’ (imperative). The role of the ordained ministry is, writes Vanhoozer, to encourage Christians to live according to this reality of Christ, not only by reference but also by embodied performance: “Ideally, they should be able to say, with Paul, ‘Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ’ (1 Cor. 11:1).” This, at least, assumes that ordained ministers are to be moral examples for the rest of the church. But did does not mean that he expects moral perfection. He writes: “Imitating Christ is not a matter of being morally perfect, but rather of dying daily to the old self (1 Cor. 15:31; cf. Luke 9:23).” It follows that Vanhoozer attempts to avoid ‘Donatism’ by stressing the ‘cruciform’ manner in which the moral character of ordination is to be performed. The moral imperative toward the minister is always performed sub cruce, in the assurance of Christ’s salvific work. It is the objectivity of salvation in Christ that in Vanhoozer’s idea provides the moral ground

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253 See especially Vanhoozer, Drama of Doctrine, 407-413.
256 See Vanhoozer, “In the Evangelical Mood,” 120-125.
257 Vanhoozer, “In the Evangelical Mood,” 124.
258 “Ethics (the domain of the imperative) is not about struggling to act like Jesus, as if Jesus were an external ideal; it is rather about acting Jesus out, because our life participates in his.” Vanhoozer, “In the Evangelical Mood,” 125.
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beneath the ministerial feet. By living a life of forgiveness based on Christ’s sacrifice, ministers can act out the theo-drama in its most existential way.

In this last section the directions of Hauerwas and Vanhoozer run further apart. Though they agree upon the immediate connection between ordination and Word/sacraments, they differ on the exact meaning of ordination itself. In Vanhoozer’s consideration, ordination charges some to ‘dramatically’ represent Christ in the community of the church, especially in the sacramental acts of preaching and the administration of the Lord’s Supper. However, unlike Hauerwas, he denies ordination itself to have sacramental value. So where Hauerwas brings a minister’s being and doing together in a ‘sacramental charge’, Vanhoozer clearly locates the ‘being’ of ministry within the ministerial practice itself, and not within his covenantal understanding of the church. Ordained ministry only corresponds to God’s provision when the performance of a minister does indeed help to create such correspondence. Thus, ordination only then becomes truthful when the performance of the minister sustains this truth. Vanhoozer’s assessment of ordination offers a striking parallel with Browne, who also linked the truthfulness of ordained ministry with the right acts—for instance, lively preaching instead of reading printed homilies—and not with the rite of ordination. Placing less emphasis on the person of the ordinand, suggests a more functional appreciation of ordination, without necessarily reducing it to a mere ‘function’. However, it is surprising that, given his earlier criticism toward the ministry as a ‘one man show’, he still assigns as vast range of responsibilities to only one office. It is a pity that he misses the opportunity to recognize pastor and teacher as two local and mutually supportive offices. Lastly, we have established that Vanhoozer attempts to avoid Donatism by stipulating the ‘cruciform’ manner in which a minister is to act out his or her ordination, thereby implying that a minister’s failures are part of his performance when met with confession and reconciliation as a demonstration of the reality of forgiveness in Christ. The question remains, what happens with ministers who refuse to admit their failures?

4.5. Directions and Further Questions

In this chapter we explored the literature of Stanley Hauerwas and Kevin Vanhoozer with the intention of finding further directions to make our retrieval of Robert Browne’s theology. Of specific interest were the three areas of conflict we encountered in § 1.6.. In this concluding paragraph, I give an overview of specific areas where Hauerwas’s and Vanhoozer’s thoughts concerning ordained ministry could benefit this study. At the same time I will also identify where I think Browne’s thinking could supplement their theology.

259 Cf. Lindbeck, The Nature of Doctrine, 51: “The same point can be made of J.L. Austin’s notion of a ‘performatory’ use of language: a religious utterance, one might say, acquires the propositional truth of ontological correspondence only insofar as it is a performance, an act or deed, which helps to create that correspondence.”
The outcome of this section will then form the basis of our retrieval in the following chapter.

1. It has become evident, first of all, that the post-Christendom ‘stripping of the ministry’ by no means poses an unequivocal problem to the purpose of this study. Hauerwas and Vanhoozer rather point to its purifying effect. They urge the need for a ‘thicker description’ from a definite Christological point of view: a theology of ministry in which the ordained ministry is not the ‘all’ of ministry, but nonetheless a valuable gift of Christ to the church. Contemporary notions such as democracy, voluntary religion, managerial leadership etc., are ‘secular’ perceptions of church and ministry. 260 Like we noticed in Browne’s thought, Ephesians 4:11 emerges with both authors as a reminder of the Christological nature of ordained ministry: Christ provides his church with ‘personnel gifts’ besides the charismatic gifts to ‘equip the saints’. A more detailed explanation of the relationship between the spiritual gifts and the gift of ordained ministry is regrettably absent. Crucial in their proposals is the explicit missional framing of both church and ordained ministry: the church exists locally as an embodied and tangible form of God’s mission. Even so, there is a difference between Hauerwas and Vanhoozer on this point. I think Hauerwas’s narrative approach of the church—the church as ‘bearer’ of the Christian story/tradition—is less capable of expressing the church as an actual participation in God’s redemptive acts (missio Dei). 261 More promising is Vanhoozer’s dramatic/covenantal approach to missio Dei, certainly in view of Browne’s theology, by way of speech-act theory; mission as God’s communicative action that establishes and invites the Christian community to be a vivid display of the gospel. 262 Recognizing the various interpretations of this term, 263 this study will use missio Dei to articulate that mission originates from the triune God as the ultimate authority, who by the sending of Son and Spirit calls to life a priestly community that exists to embody his rule. 264 In other words, mission requires in the first place that the church

260 Cf. “Hauerwas is first and foremost a theologian who calls the church to faithfulness and, as a corollary of this, warns against dilution of the church’s witness through ‘secularization’”. Herman Paul, “Stanley Hauerwas: Against Secularization in the Church,” ZDT 29, no. 2 (2013): 13.

261 It is significant that Hauerwas, as far as I could ascertain, never uses the common term missio Dei to denote the church’s mission. Possibly since missio Dei carries the suggestion that God’s mission is far wider than the church (viz. ‘the church is only one player in God’s mission’), while for Hauerwas God’s mission and the church are almost identical.

262 Cf. Barry Harvey, Can These Bones Live: A Catholic Baptist Engagement with Ecclesiology, Hermeneutics, and Social Theory (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008), 160: “Such models help us to make explicit the dramatic nature of the biblical story and highlight in an insightful and cogent way the improvisational character of the interpretative task, which can be undertaken only by a skilled company of performers.”


knows what its *commission* is. It is henceforth the church’s collective priestly participation in the *missio Dei* that also provides intelligibility to the existence and purpose of a distinct ministry characterized by ordination. Where the priestly ministry of the whole church is to witness in the *world*, ordained ministers witness primarily in the *church*. Thus, ordained ministers are not there to replace the ministry of the church, but rather serve its participation in God’s salvific work. Like our cited critics, Vanhoozer too attributes ‘lay passivity’ to the tendency of replacing the church—the company of the gospel—with the minister’s one man show. Only, the way to reverse this regrettable tendency is not by the abolition of the laity, but by reassessing ordained ministry as agents of the church’s missional vocation. For if post-Christendom has brought the ecumenical conversation only one thing, it is broad rediscovery of social dimension of the gospel, now also by churches outside of the Free Church tradition: the conviction that it requires a local community to minister the Christian faith.

Browne’s theology could strengthen the current missional shaping of ecclesiology by explaining not only the church’s participation, as Vanhoozer does, but also the distinctive role of the ordained ministry in terms of covenant. His ‘covenantal’ approach to Ephesians 4:11 enables us to locate the nature and character of ordained ministry not only in God’s initiative, or in the ‘will of the people’, but in the joining of both. To Browne the ordained ministry is the first gift of Christ to his covenanted church as confirmation of their communal identity as a Christocracy. In this way ordained ministry will not displace the role of the gathered community as the *esse* of the church, nor would it reduce the ordained ministry to sheer option. Browne shows how ordained ministry ‘flows’ from the very being (*esse*) of the church to serve that very being, and not merely its ‘wellbeing’ (*bene esse*). Another aspect, to which Browne’s thinking can make an beneficial contribution is the theme of ministerial continuity, often associated with apostolic succession. Although Hauerwas points to the tradition of Israel as a precursor for ecclesial ministry, he does not explain such a continuity theologically. Browne’s covenantal embedding of ordained ministry, moreover, enables us to renew our understanding of apostolic succession as covenantal succession. He shows that the continuity between the local ministry of a church and God’s sending of messengers throughout salvific history is not maintained by sacerdotal conveyance, but by God’s covenantal promise as found in Ephesians 4:11.

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265 Cf. “In some Christian circles it is unfashionable to talk much about the ordained ministry, because of the fear of being guilty of elitism, one of contemporary society’s catalogue of unforgivable sins. Without going into an elaborate discussion of this fear, I will make two simple points. First, I hope I have made clear my belief that it is the whole Church which is called to be—in Christ—a royal priesthood, and that this priesthood is to be exercised in the daily life and work of Christian in the secular business of the world. But this will not happen unless there is a ministerial priesthood which serves, nourishes, sustains, and guides this priestly work.” Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 235.
2. Powerful in both Hauerwas and Vanhoozer’s proposal is the need for catholicity, especially in a post-Christendom era. Since it provides the locality of congregational ecclesiology with the transcendent notion that the church of Christ exists across the world, across time, in diverse contexts, as priestly embodiments of Christ’s reign. Hauerwas, therefore, sees catholicity as the other side of the missio Dei. It is within the local community where Christian life in all its concreteness is lived and, crucially, the Word is preached and the sacraments are administrated. Ordained ministers, therefore, have a prominent ‘catholic’ role as their ministry is prominently linked with the administration of Word and sacrament. Though catholicity as such is not always mentioned a distinct theme in Hauerwas’s books, his literature is undeniably an attempt to bridge Protestant and Roman-Catholic notions of ministry. Vanhoozer makes it a ministerial priority to help the local church rise above its locality by the implementation of ‘catholic’ theology. Though catholicity is not so much a theme in Browne’s ‘Separatist’ argument, his embrace of a synodic structure, coupled with the role of ministry therein, does show an awareness of a large ecclesial body that transcends the local. Synods could be a concrete vehicle especially for congregational ecclesiology, to give the notion of catholicity a more visible and tangible form. Moreover, a synodic structure could also provide the ‘sub-magisterial framework’ needed to correct ordained ministers and local churches whose interpretation crosses the ‘catholic lines’. Though Browne stressed that church always ‘happens’ in a local and concrete fashion, he was also aware that the local church was never the whole church of Christ and needed the support and counsel of the broader covenantal communion.

3. Both authors point to the problematic concept of ministerial authority in terms of ‘specialist advice’—as for example suggested by McClendon—as it neglects to root itself within Christ’s provisionary care. Notably, Hauerwas strongly argues that community presupposes authority in order to be community. He shows convincingly how ministerial authority does not have to replace the collective authority but could be a means through which the community is served. Ministerial authority has the ability to show what the church’s allegiance to Christ ‘signifies’ in concrete circumstances. In this way, ministers enable the church to continue their missional vocation. Vanhoozer, critically engaging Hauerwas, binds ministerial authority not to the community as such, but directly to the magisterial authority of Scripture. For if a minister’s authority would rest entirely upon the community’s authority, it would render critical correction ineffective.

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266 Cf. “Hauerwas, is not addressing a specific kind of church, but he writes for the whole church, for the one and only catholic church.” Baan, The Necessity of Witness, 48. Precisely for this reason I think Arne Rasmusson’s adoption of Hauerwas as a representative of Radical Reformation theology (see his The Church as Polis, 23-27), is a too one-sided presentation. Though it is true that he mainly focusses on political theology, it can be concluded from this study that Hauerwas’s political theology cannot be severed from the institutional nature of the church visible in its own ministerial structures, including both clergy and laity. In recent decades, I found, this emphasis has even grown stronger, seeing his appreciation for sacramental theology, elevation of tradition as most valued source of Scriptural interpretation (cf. Hays, The Moral Vision of the New Testament, 253-265), England’s parish structure, the priestly vocabulary etc.
impossible. Something which is—as notably evidenced by Browne’s polemic literature—sometimes most necessary. Striking therefore, is the similarity between Browne and both authors as they explains a minister’s authority in terms of the prevalent image of the prophet. A prophet speaks on behalf of a higher authority not by the use or backing of a coercive force, but by vulnerable faithfulness. This image is especially helpful with regard to the postmodernity’s resentment toward authoritarianism. Vanhoozer’s reference to Shakespeare’s fool in *King Lear* is a helpful image. Ministerial authority is not exercised by the overweight of physical power and control, but by vulnerability. Prophets need to sustain their message by accountability and exemplary behavior. It has become clear, therefore, that ministerial authority needs to be substantiated by a life of discipleship. For only through lively embodiment can a minister be a credible witness who draws people into the story/drama of the gospel so that the church is more fully equipped to determine its course in the world. I think Browne’s covenantal embedding of ordained ministry could provide a way to envision authority and accountability as two sides of the same ‘ministerial’ coin. When ordained ministry depends on the ‘covenental orders’ between a ministerial candidate and a congregation, this would presuppose mutual commitment. In other words ministerial authority and accountability are then not only formal arrangements regulated by rules and regulations, but a vivid part of communal life and discipleship that receives its intelligibility of the nature of the church as a covenanted community.

4. Besides vulnerability and discipleship, Hauerwas and Vanhoozer mutually define the *esse* of ordained ministry as a theological office: to teach the church to speak and act faithfully in terms of the gospel. This is a definite correction of contemporary therapeutic and managerial categories. Both authors describe the task of an ordained minister in terms of a ‘resident theological hermeneutist’ who provides the church with a better understanding of how to enact the Scriptural story. Likeise, ordained ministers ‘train’ local communities to live within the world from the perspective of God’s rule in Christ. Of course, their proposals resound Browne’s criticism toward the ‘dumb ministry’ of those who were incapable of providing their parishes with adequate Scriptural teaching and practical divinity. Especially, Vanhoozer’s use of improvisation is appealing, as it joins the importance of theological training with practical divinity and contextual/cultural awareness. The same thought is present in Hauerwas’s thought: preaching as a prophetic act by which the story of Scripture receives an actual ‘improvisation’ within a specific context. Confining the task of the ordained office entirely to theological ‘leadership’—to use the haunted word once—it also follows that ministers need to be sufficiently trained themselves. Hauerwas’s example of the master bricklayer illustrates the gravity of theological sophistication to be able to initiate others within the communal practices and beliefs. Note that theological sophistication does not necessarily imply academic scholarship, but more importantly, a lived and practical type
of theological knowledge, which Vanhoozer’s concept of the ‘organic intellectual’ tries to accentuate. For, as he repeats Browne’s sixteenth-century call, the purpose of a minister’s theological office is not scholarly erudition, but the ability to sustain the church’s performance of the gospel. A lasting problem with Vanhoozer’s fourfold description of ministry is that it still assumes a rather broad spectrum of ‘ministries’ residing with only one person. He follows Calvin’s debatable understanding of Ephesians 4:11 in which the office of teacher is reserved for the ‘university doctor’. Browne’s plural understanding of local ministry—a pastor and a teacher—would be a helpful correction of the contemporary preoccupation with the singular minister as factotum.

5. The significance of ordination is a sensitive issue within congregational ecclesiology and certainly among critics of ordained ministry. This difficulty is mirrored in the differences between Hauerwas and Vanhoozer on this issue, each having it strengths and flaws. Despite their differences, it is clear that ordination has to do with a charge to the ministry of Word and sacrament. Hauerwas turns to sacramental theology to balance the moral obligations of an ordained minister. Over the years, this appreciation for sacramental theology seems to have been greater than before, observing his adoption of Catholic priesthood in place of his previous talk of ‘leadership’. Though he always acknowledged that ‘something happened’ during ordination—as the investment of communal power—it is unclear if his rejection of the character indelebilis in Resident Aliens (1989) is still standing today. Hauerwas’s ambivalent use of sacramental theology cannot, in the end, sufficiently account for its dependency on the community. Vanhoozer’s understanding of ordination, though very dim, is generally more functional. His emphasis is, in correspondence with his entire ecclesiology, on the ‘doing/drama’ of the ministry: a minister’s character is caught in the act. He refuses a total functionalistic interpretation, and only allows for a sacramental ‘edge’ to the ministry due to its strong association with the preaching of the Word. The obvious question is of course, why only in preaching? Nonetheless, he obviously wants to avoid a purely symbolical appreciation of ordination, as he considers it an actual ‘act’ by which the church ‘assigns’ or ‘sets apart’ a particular person for Word and sacrament. Unfortunately, he overlooks to implicate ordination within his covenantal ontology. In conclusion, both proposals are unclear about the theological significance of ordination in relation to the community. Browne’s theology would therefore benefit today’s controversy, as he directs us to understand ordination as a real covenantal event. ‘Something happens’ but not ‘within’ the person, but with the person ‘within’ the church covenant: a covenantal re-ordering. Hence, an ordained minister is placed under ‘covenantal orders’.

6. In response to the problem of Donatism we encountered in Browne’s theology—in which ministry is made dependent on a minister’s morality—we found some tentative directions in Hauerwas’s and Vanhoozer’s work. Only Hauerwas deals plainly with the question of Donatism, and finds his solution in sacramental theology. He
frames the moral obligation to develop an exemplary character within his sacramental understanding of ordination. In this way ‘ordained office’ does not stand or fall with morality, but cannot be separated from it either. The question remains what would happen if an ordained minister persists in a lifestyle that cannot bear the approval of the church? Vanhoozer, on his turn, only indirectly addressing the issue of morality and ordination, when arguing that a minister leads his church not only by outstanding morality but also by his failure and seeking forgiveness. While his idea of ‘ministry under the cross’ does avoid ministerial perfectionism, the question of congregational accountability still stands. In conclusion, I observe that both authors assume some kind of accountability and the need for morality from the side of the ordained minister, yet do not sufficiently explain how a minister’s ministry is subject to permanent accountability. Thus where Browne’s theology of ordained ministry needs redirection in view of his Donatist inclinations, his covenantal framing of ordination might offer a better way to connect a minister’s morality with his communal role.

4.6. Conclusions
This chapter intended to broaden our earlier reading of Browne’s literature and bring it on par with the present debate on ordained ministry in a post-Christendom context, in order to find directives for our retrieval of Robert Browne’s theology of ordained ministry. We have therefore consulted two leading theologians, who not only represent a particular stream within the current theological spectrum, but also dealt specifically with the challenges and controversies we explored in Chapter 1. Besides some important differences in emphasis—specifically with regard to role of Scripture in relation to the community and the evaluation of sacramental theology—Hauerwas and Vanhoozer unanimously agree that the downfall of Christendom, and its associated ‘stripping of the ministry’, rather than marking the end of ordained ministry (viz. an ‘abolishment of the clergy’), should be welcomed as a chance to return the distinctive ministry of the ordained to its missional purpose according to Ephesians 4:11. Several other theological notions, such as catholicity and missio Dei, have come into play here. With regard to the contemporary distrust of institutional authorities, they direct us to a more communitarian appropriation of authority in which ministerial authority is not exercised by obvious superiority but by vulnerable accountability and theological competence. Remarkable in both propositions is the appearance of the prophet to denote a minister’s authority. The question remains how the authority of Scripture relates to the authority of the ordained minister. Nevertheless, they agree that ministerial authority is no end in itself, but should be subject to the priestly mission of the church in the world. With regard to the ordination-rite and its instant association with clerical sanctity, Hauerwas and Vanhoozer go their separate ways. Hauerwas connects a sacramental understanding with
moral expectations, while Vanhoozer takes a more functional approach to ordination, which leaves room for ministerial exemplarity including failure and forgiveness.
Chapter 5

A Retrieval of Browne’s Theology of Ordained Ministry: Reforming Controversy into Covenant

5.1. Introduction
In this chapter our final retrieval will be made in order to make a final assessment of Robert Browne’s contribution in order to construe outlines for a theology of ordained ministry in light of today’s challenges. After our contextual analysis of Browne’s theological environment in Chapter 2, a reconstruction of his own theology of ordained ministry in Chapter 3, and our contemporary exploration in the proposals of Stanley Hauerwas and Kevin Vanhoozer in Chapter 4, this final chapter seeks to effectuate these findings into a concluding evaluation by providing a constructive proposal for a contemporary theology of ordained ministry. For that reason, this chapter is an attempt to combine the outcome of the previous chapters into one coherent proposal in order to make the role of ordained ministry intelligible for Baptists, as well as the broader Free Church tradition in the secular West (§ 1.4.). A context in which the old structures of Christendom are disappearing and in which the church must account for its marginal role and functions, face a loss of authority, and survive the consumerist ethos that marks our society. These social changes challenge the church to rethink its own mission now its ecclesiology is no longer naturally sustained by the structures of Western culture. This study seeks to contribute to solutions to these challenges by envisioning a theology of ordained ministry within a context that ‘stripped’ the minister of its notable status and prestige.

As announced at the beginning of this study, this final chapter will use the three established criteria of Chapter 1 (§ 1.6.4.)—that is to say ‘communal priesthood’, ‘permanent accountability’, and ‘interdependence’—as guidelines for the retrieval of Browne’s covenantal concept of ordained ministry, in order to determine its contribution for the contemporary church in the West. Additionally, the previous four chapters almost continuously stumbled upon Ephesians 4:11 as a key text in the discussions over ordained ministry. The references to this text, and the interpretations of it, can aptly be described as a Leitmotiv that connects the previous chapters. Moreover, not only in the present-day proposals of Stuart Murray and John Colwell, but also during the Reformation era, from Martin Bucer to Robert Browne, as well as in the more recent contributions of Stanley Hauerwas and Kevin Vanhoozer, it is this text that emerges as a model, a criterion, or a reminder of what ordained ministry is or should be. That this text repeatedly surfaces in our investigations should not be surprising, since the ecclesiological importance of the
letter to the Ephesians is widely recognized.\(^1\) Luke Timothy Johnson writes that this letter, especially concerning “the nature and mission of the church,” can be regarded as “the fullest and most mature letter in the Pauline collection.”\(^2\) Therefore, we can assume—partly supported by our own research—that it is not the significance of Ephesians 4:11 which is disputed, but its interpretation and application for a contemporary understanding of ministry that is contested. Nevertheless, we have also concluded that most authors—including Browne himself—hardly provide their interpretation with any detailed exegetical support. For that reason, this chapter seeks both to join this prominent reception of Ephesians 4:11 that we have established in the previous chapters, while also bringing it in accordance with contemporary exegetical studies.\(^3\) This interaction is not executed in order to simply repeat what these texts says, but through an informed and inspired scrutiny of this Biblical text, to enter into the discussion, and thereby evaluate the contributions of these previous chapters in light of the contemporary challenges.\(^4\) Theology, as understood and practiced within the broad

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\(^1\) See for example Andrew T. Lincoln, “Ephesians,” in The Cambridge Companion to St Paul, ed. James D.G. Dunn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 133: "In terms of content, the concentrated attention it gives to the phenomenon of the church stands out, so that it is not at all surprising that this letter has been a key resource for theological reflection on the corporate nature of Christian existence.”


\(^4\) See Gerard C. Den Hertog and Cornelis van der Kooi, eds. Tussen leer en lezen: De spanning tussen Bijbelwetenschap en geloofsleer (Kampen: Kok, 2007), 236: “Voor de dogmatisch blijft gelden dat zij ten diepste zich moet bezinnen op de vraag wat in verantwoordelijkheid tegenover de bijbelse teksten en de christelijke traditie met recht over God gezegd mag of moet worden.” [As to dogmatics, it remains crucially pertinent that its deepest insights reflect what can be discerned regarding the question of what biblically, and within Christian tradition, responsibly can or must be said about God].
Reformed tradition, always seeks to bring contemporary challenges in a probing conversation with Scripture. Therefore, this final chapter will consist of three probing sections, in which every criterion is discussed in turn to Ephesians 4:11, to Browne’s contribution, and to the further directions of Hauerwas and Vanhoozer. Every section ends with a theological direction for our time. To prevent these directions from remaining only abstract theory, they are accompanied by exemplary stories of ministers who have embodied this ‘direction’ in their lives, and thereby showed what it means to be ordained.5

5.2. Criterion 1: Communal Priesthood
The first criterion we have established is: A theology of ordained ministry should serve the communal existence of the church as a priestly people in the world. Hence, ordained ministry may never become a substitute for the missionary calling of the church as a communal priesthood. For, as said before, it belongs to the defining essence of congregational ecclesiology to regard the phrase ‘in the name of Christ’ gathered community” (cf. Mat. 18:20) as the ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic church’. Hence, congregational ecclesiology ultimately seeks to articulate how the church, as a concrete ‘community of priests’, should participate in the mission of God in the world. From which it follows that a contemporary theology of ordained ministry should contribute and strengthen this priestly mission of the church. To explain how Browne’s theology of ordained ministry furthers the communal priesthood, I will first discuss how Ephesians 4 talks about the ‘ministry of some’ in relation to the ministry of all the saints (§ 5.2.1.). This analysis will provide an impetus to a retrieval of a distinct ministry that owes its existence to the church as communion of saints, and finds its purpose in God’s mission. In § 5.2.2. I will address Browne’s ecclesiological contribution to our thinking upon the relation between ordained ministry and the communal priesthood. His particular covenantal approach will help us better describe this controversial relationship between a distinct ministry and the community, without leading to the displacement of either one. At the same time, due to the passing of time, and specifically the downfall of Christendom and its self-evident structures, this covenantal concept of church and ministry is faced with new challenges. To redefine Browne’s contribution for our own day, I will enunciate where both Hauerwas and Vanhoozer offer new language in order to articulate a contemporary theology of ministry in § 5.2.3. Finally, in § 5.2.4., I will conclude this first

5 We already encountered the practice of storytelling as theological method in our discussion of Hauerwas in Chapter 4 (§ 4.3.1.) as a way to point out that theological claims cannot be separated from biographical narrative, since life and theology are mutually informative. See elaborately James Wm. McClendon, Biography as Theology: How Life Stories Can Remake Today's Theology (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, [1974], 2002). A recent use of storytelling as a theological argument can be found in Ariaan Baan, see The Necessity of Witness: Stanley Hauerwas’s Contribution to Systematic Theology (Eugene: Pickwick Publishers, 2015), esp. 170-218.
section with a call for the recognition of ordained ministry as a distinct ‘order’ of ministry, and the testimony of the ministry of ‘Frits de Drifter’.

5.2.1. Ephesians 4:11 and the Gift of Ministers

Ephesians 4:11 can be found in the opening chapter of the second half of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. Having displayed the consequences of God’s power in Christ, especially with regard to relationship between Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 2:11-22), he transitions to its implications for the life of the church. It begins with an exhortation on the importance of ecclesial unity (ἕνότητα, Eph. 4:1-6), and then continues with an explanation of the ways in which Christ sustains and cultivates this unity by the offering of gifts (Eph. 4:7-16): ‘all’ (ἐκάστῳ ἡμῶν) participate in Christ’s ‘grace’ (ἡ χάρις, Eph. 4:7) in view of their common growth in maturity in Christ (Eph. 4:13). In addition to the inclusive salutation found in the introduction (Eph. 1:1), this is a clear indication that Paul not only addresses some members, but that his audience consists of the wider community in Ephesus. A circle that can be drawn even more broadly considering the different reading variants in which ‘in Ephesus’ (ἐν Ἐφέσῳ, Eph. 1:1) is omitted—possibly suggesting a wider readership. Many have also argued that the Ephesian letter employs a more inclusive (‘universal’) concept of ‘church’ comprising several communities (Eph. 1:22; 3:10; 21; 5:23-25, 27, 29, 32), something F.F. Bruce termed an ‘incipient catholicism’. On the same basis, a difference is observed with other Pauline letters, such as notably the letter to Corinth, where ‘church’ is strictly applied to the local community (1 Cor. 11:18; 12:28). In this study, the ‘catholic’ notion of Ephesians shall be taken as an incentive to develop a more catholic oriented ecclesiology.
1. In view of the criterion of communal priesthood, the sentence in Ephesians 4:12—‘to equip the saints for the work of ministry’ (πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἔργον διακονίας, εἰς ὁικοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ’) draws our particular attention. Although recent translations imply a direct connection between ‘the saints’ and ‘the work of the ministry’, there has been some debate over this exact linkage. Due to the use of three prepositions (πρὸς, εἰς, εἰς), which separate the sentence into three parts, the question is raised whether διακονία belongs to the listed ministries of Ephesians 4:11, and is thus coordinate with ‘equipping the saints’, or whether διακονία is the object of ‘equipping the saints’, thus ‘equipping the saints for ministry’. While the prepositions used could be applied interchangeably, many commentators have claimed that the whole sentence should be read sequential. Consequently, the ‘equipment of the saints’ has ‘the work of the ministry’ as its objective, which in its turn has ‘the building up of the body of Christ’ as its objective. In that case, it follows that Christ’s provision of the listed ministries serves the ministerial participation of the community of saints. This interpretation, however, has become less straightforward due to the work of John N. Collins. In his groundbreaking study Diakonia (1990), and numerous other publications, he reviewed the standard translation and understanding of the Greek term διακονία, stating that it should not be translated with ‘loving service’ but should be read in the sense of ‘mandated delegacy’, since it bears the connotations of a certain order, a representation, and a position with authority to which a person has been installed. Hence he claims that διακονία entails a sacred commission and could be adequately rendered as ‘official ministry’. Collins’s reinterpretation of διακονία has found wide acceptance and agreement. Interesting for this study is also Collins’s discussion of

from becoming parochial or sectarian.” Lincoln, “Ephesians,” 138. Lincoln even suggests an Ephesian background to the Nicene Creed’s formulation (‘We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church’).

12 See Bruce, The Epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians, 339, 345-346; Talbert, Ephesians and Colossians, 113-114; Larkin, Ephesians, 78-79; Shkul, Reading Ephesians, 168; and Thielman, Ephesians, 279-280

13 See notably Collins, Diakonia, esp. 227-234; and Deacons and the Church, esp. 27-85. Collins recently confirmed his previous research in Diakonia Studies: Critical Issues in Ministry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Ephesians (3:7; 4:12): “On hearing of a ‘minister/diakonos’ (Ephesians 3:7) bearing ‘revelation’ from the other world, the Hellenistic audience at once recognized a special category of messenger.”¹⁵ In other words, using the vocabulary of διάκονος here is aimed to stress the continuity between the work of the apostles and the author himself as part of the same gospel work of unraveling the mystery of Christ (τῷ μυστηρίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, Eph. 3:4). In short, these ‘messengers’ are mandated agents: “As a ‘minister/diakonos’ his first responsibility was to be ‘faithful’, that is, trustworthy in the performance of his mandate.”¹⁶ Collins therefore disputes the former interpretation that connects ‘the work of the ministry’ to the aforementioned ‘saints’.¹⁷ For, in his understanding, the noun διακονίας in Ephesians 4:12 cannot include ‘all’ as this would eradicate the specific meaning it had within the first-century context: “Such readings cut Paul’s ‘ministry/diakonia’ adrift from any notion of sacred mandate. In Paul’s writings, however, there is no instance of this word, or of its associated terms where the notion of sacred mandate is not represented. This mandate is generally his own heavenly mandate to purvey the word of God.”¹⁸ For example, the parallel sentence in Ephesians 3:7 in which διάκονος refers exclusively to Paul’s own commission to be an apostle for the gentiles (cf. Eph. 3:1-6). Hence, Collins’s thesis demystified an ‘official’ reading of our text Ephesians 4:11-4:12: “the expression ‘ministries/diakonia’ of itself incorporates ‘a prerogative of official proclamation’ within the functioning of the church. We know this because Paul is invoking a conventional Greek term to convey the idea that—at the heart of the Christian church—there exists a sacred mandate to conserve, and pass on, the Word of God.”¹⁹ From which it follows that the ministries of verse 11 could well be understood as pointing to the ‘ordered’ way in which Christ dispenses his Word to his church. Collins’s rendering means a reappraisal of the RSV-translation (1946, or the old Dutch SV, “State Translation”), which places a comma between τῶν ἁγίων and εἰς ἔργον διακονίας: ‘for equipping the saints, for the work of ministry, and for building up the body of Christ.’²⁰ Collins’s reading of verse 11-12 finds further support in an article by Sydney H.T. Page.

¹⁵ Collins, Deacons and the Church, 79.
¹⁶ Collins, Deacons and the Church, 79.
¹⁷ See Collins, Diakonia, 233-234; and Deacons and the Church, 81; Paula Gooder in her appreciative discussion of Collins’ work questions his rather strict interpretation on this point (see “Diakonia in the New Testament,” 53-54), but she nonetheless concludes: “The question is a matter of syntax and both meanings are possible. . . . The question cannot be adequately solved.” Moreover, she concludes, that even if ‘the work of the ministry’ refers to the ‘equipment of the saints’ it does not necessarily mean that ‘all’ are also involved in the ministry: “All should be prepared, but not all will be commissioned.”
¹⁸ Collins, Deacons and the Church, 82.
¹⁹ Collins, Deacons and the Church, 84.
who adds that καταρτισμόν in verse 12 does not denote a specific task (i.e. ‘equipment for ministry’) but rather refers to moral and spiritual maturation.21 Interesting for our purposes, is the fact that this coordinate reading of Ephesians 4:11-12 also ‘retrieves’ the Reformed interpretation we encountered in Browne’s literature. The ‘comma of Collins’ subsequently invokes the question, why and with what purpose Paul chose to single out these ministries from the general provision of gifts in the verses mentioned in verse 7 and 8?

2. In his recent study Emerging Leadership in the Pauline Mission (2011), Jack Barentsen explains Paul’s positioning of the “Christ ordained” ministries in relation to ‘the saints’ (Eph. 4:12) as an attempt to stress the legitimacy of local ministers from the continuity with his own apostolic ministry:

Paul reinterpreted the past, including the church’s memory of himself as apostle, in order to provide an identity narrative as foundation of the community’s vision of social identity, in which Paul figured as key exemplar and prototype. . . Paul orchestrated the reception of local leaders as a divine benefaction for the community and not as a social contest for influence and honor.22

Ephesians 4:7-11, accordingly, presents Christ as the supreme authority who offers certain persons (cf. 1 Cor. 3:5), whose ‘office’ has been divinely legitimized in association with the apostolic leadership.23 The ministries of verse 11 are enumerated and singled out because Paul appoints these as ‘local representations’ of his own apostolic ministry. Thus, if the mentioned ministries in verse 11 would be equal to the distribution of charismatic gifts to the entire congregation, the sentence would lose its force. Even Gordon Fee, who refuses any inclination of ‘official ministry’ based on this text, acknowledges that Paul distinguishes a ‘ministry of some’ (cf. τοὺς μὲν, τοὺς δὲ, Eph. 4:11) from a general concept of ministry: “Thus, instead of listing ways in which ‘grace has been given to each of us,’ he lists some of the gifted people who are gifts themselves to the church.”24 Of course, this does not imply that the text also provides an indication that these ministries were

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22 Barentsen, Emerging Leadership in the Pauline Mission, 173.

23 Cf. Barentsen, Emerging Leadership in the Pauline Mission, 150, 152, 176-177; and Lincoln, Ephesians, xciv, 233, 248-249. Even Gordon Fee writes: ”These ministries empower the whole body to carry out its ministry of building up the body for maturity, soundness, and unity, drawing its life-flow from its one head, Jesus Christ.” Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 706; and also Shkul, Reading Ephesians, 198-199. She reads the letter to the Ephesians through the lens of social entrepreneurship; a deliberate attempt to shape ideological beliefs and social orientations of Christ followers. Accordingly, the ministries listed in Ephesians 4:11 function as exemplars and social entrepreneurs within the community. Contra Beasley-Murray, ”The Ministry of All and the Leadership of Some,” 157-174.

24 Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 706. The same biased argument is made in his commentary on the opening verse of Phil. 1:1, where he states that ”in Paul’s usage, as with all his designations of church leaders, it first of all denotes a ‘function,’ rather than an ‘office.’” Gordon D. Fee, Philippians (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995), 68.
accompanied by the rite of ordination of some sort. Nonetheless, Barentsen concludes that it does reveal “the emerging contours of organizational office.”

When affirming that the ‘equipment of the saints’ is central to our text, it also follows that Paul’s argument presupposes a certain distinction between ‘the saints’ and the listed ministries in verse 11. In other words, the resurrected and ascended Christ sends some people as gifts to the church in line with his sending of apostles, in order for the church to be equipped and grow in the life of Christ (Eph. 4:13-16). By making this implication, I certainly do not wish to impose any sense of ‘spiritual classes’ upon the text, but rather identify a form of ministry that originates in Christ’s mission. Moreover, since the section is concerned with the unity of the church, the author is apparently convinced that the distinction between the divinely ordained ministries of verse 11 and the Spirit-endowed community of the saints in verse 12 (cf. Eph. 1:13, 17; 2:18, 22) does not in any way compromise ‘the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace’ (Eph. 4:3).  

Rather, the gift of special ministry is presented in view of the church’s mission, revealing God’s mysterious plan with the world. Special ministry and the church’s missionary calling are no opposites. This is precisely the problem with the contemporary concept of ‘every member ministry’ as espoused by Stuart Murray, Michael Frost, Alan Hirsch (§ 1.4.), and—notably—by James McClendon and Miroslav Volf (§ 1.6.1 and § 1.6.3.), which some argued for on the basis of this text. However, they thereby unnecessarily put forward an improper contrasting of sorts, which has derailed the debate on ministry to an either/or interpretation: it is either the official ministry of some, or the charismatic ministry of all. And even though Volf does not mention Ephesians 4:11 specifically in his study, he does identify ministerial office exclusively with the charismatic gift of leadership, and thereby denies this twofold distribution of Christ’s ‘personnel’ gifts and the charismatic gifts.

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25 Barentsen, Emerging Leadership in the Pauline Mission, 176. According to Barentsen, Ephesians shows different from 1 Corinthians “a universalizing vision of Christian social identity, in which both apostolic and local leadership receive ideological legitimation for current and future generations.”


27 “The church is the place in the world where this mysterious plan of God is being revealed (3:9–11). The nature and mission of the church is therefore the same: to be the symbol of the world’s possibility by being the place in the world where human differences do not separate but provide the basis for a deeper unity in the Spirit (4:11–16).” Johnson, “Paul’s Ecclesiology,” 209. Contra Talbert, Ephesians and Colossians, 115. He unnecessarily contrasts spiritual maturation and mission.

28 Volf’s entire charismatic ecclesiology is almost exclusively founded on Acts and 1 Corinthians. He only refers to Ephesians 4:7 to denote the universal distribution of charismata, but neglects to incorporate the rest of the chapter, see After Our Likeness, 229.

29 We should take Max Turner’s caution into account and not turn the twofold gifts, viz. δόματα and χαρίσματα, into actual termini technici: “In brief; unless one wishes to argue that the writer of Ephesians had made domata into a ‘technical term’ as well, the parallel with the use of charismata in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 suggests we need not invoke the theory of the creation of a technical expression in the earlier two letter either” (see Turner, The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts, 273).
I conclude, therefore, that Ephesians 4 does not contain an improper contradiction between the recognition of an official ministry besides the (charismatic) community of the saints. This means that official ministry does not automatically or necessarily lead to the abolishment of the charismatic involvement of the community, nor is a vice versa argument sustainable. Instead, the text of Ephesians, with all its difficulties in view, rather provides a Biblical paradigm for a twofold approach to ministry and is one that recognizes an official ministry given by Christ, in continuation with his sending of apostles, to—and embedded within—the community of the saints as a whole.

5.2.2. Browne’s Contribution 1: Ordained Ministry as Covenantal Gift

The recognition of a twofold distribution of gifts does not yet necessarily contain a theology of ordained ministry. It still leaves open the questions of how the dual form of ministerial distribution could be articulated, and why ‘official’ ministers need to be ordained. On this point Browne’s covenantal approach to the gift of ordained ministry offers direction. Differing from what some twentieth and twenty-first century readings concluded, Browne was not the ecclesiological anarchist, nor the ‘populist revoler’ as Peter Lake pictures him. It paints an erroneous portrait of English Separatism that, regrettably, continues in Volf’s egalitarian and anti-clerical study of Free Church ecclesiology.30 Volf, in my view, too quickly adopted the English Separatist tradition as his fellow combatants in the pursuit of an anticlerical ecclesiology. Rather, to the contrary, our present study established that in the emerging congregational ecclesiology pioneered by Browne, modernist ideas of autonomy and democratic ideals are absent. Moreover, our analysis has instead shown a tremendous similarity with the ecclesiological agenda of his Presbyterian contemporaries. Browne’s reception of Ephesians 4:11 was precisely aimed to correct the episcopal hierarchical concept of ministry with a more Biblically oriented concept of ordained ministry, rising up as well as embedded within the local congregation. Browne continued what we have termed the ‘turn to the local church’, initiated by the Presbyterians, and developed it into covenantal ecclesiology in which the ordained ministry was not enforced by an episcopal ordination upon a local parish, but was rather elected and received by the gathered community as a Christological provision. In this provisional way both the church’s gathering and the ordained ministry were considered part of the Christocracy that defined the nature of the church.

30 This objection has already been brought forward in the study of Kevin Bidwell: “He [Volf, JMA] interprets this movement by echoing the words of Peter Lake, who understands it as a ‘populist revolt against any sort ministerial elite.’ Volf adds his own commentary to the situation by stating that it was “a populist protest against the hierarchical structure of the church.” Furthermore, Volf contends that there is an unmistakable ‘red thread running through all their writings’ and that is ‘the antimonarchical and generally antihierarchical political implications of this basic, anticlerical ecclesiological decision.’” Kevin J. Bidwell, “The Church as the Image of the Trinity”: A Critical Evaluation of Miroslav Volf’s Ecclesial Model (WEST Theological Monograph Series; Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 6.
1. Browne’s particular contribution to this study is his covenantal approach to Christocracy. As noted, he understood the covenant as a Christological invitation to join the reality of the ‘covenant of grace’ as identified in Reformed theology (§ 3.3.2.). Churches were ‘planted’ not merely through the presence of a preaching ministry representing Christ’s rule by Scripture, as argued by Thomas Cartwright, but fully there where people responded with obedience to Christ’s call to live faithfully to God’s Word in community. In this way, the church is a visible configuration of the eternal covenant of grace which God has made with all human beings, as a means of participation in the triune God.31 Hence, when people gather to covenant with God, they receive Christ’s gracious inheritance and everything that comes with it. Browne can therefore be considered a ‘congregationalist pioneer’ since he understood the gathering of believers around the Word under Christ’s lordship as the essential ecclesial means by which a church is constituted (Mat. 18:20). Though the common priesthood as a *terminus technicus* is not heavily emphasized in his literature—since his arguments mostly concerned the ordained ministry, he clearly did recognize the priestly identity of the covenanted church. A few times he refers to communal participation in Christ’s priesthood as the ‘means’ to uphold communal discipline. Browne’s covenantal emphasis receives a contemporary advocate in Kevin Vanhoozer, who quite similarly, explains the need for obedience/discipleship in response to God’s call in terms of ‘covenantal discourse’ (§ 4.2.2.): God’s speech entails human action. The church, accordingly, exemplifies the dramatic nature of God’s covenant of grace.

From this perspective, we can retrieve Browne’s covenantal ecclesiology—an early attempt to bridge the Reformed belief system with concrete discipleship (*viz.* ‘true manners’)—to recognize the gathering of the faithful as an actual performance of Christ’s provision of grace and part of God’s universal mission. *First of all,* since covenant denotes God’s redemptive mission through Christ in continuation with the preceding covenants in the history of Israel, which is at the heart of the church’s *esse*: the vicarious suffering and death of God’s servant and Passover lamb (1 Cor. 11:25).32 *Secondly,* it is because covenantal theology offers a practical form of relational theology that does justice to the historical narrative of the Christian faith and stimulates the concrete practice of piety (*praxis pietatis*) in everyday life.33 ‘Covenant’, hence, avoids

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33 See Willem J. van Asselt, “Covenant and Trinity: The Contributions of Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669) and John Owen (1618-1683) to Relational Theology,” in *Van God gesproken: Over taal en relationele theologie*, eds. Theo Boer,
the reduction of ecclesiology to abstract theories, without falling prey to contemporary subjectivism. Browne’s covenantal understanding of the church—accordingly—will help us appreciate the local church as a concrete and visible participation in God’s gracious presence. ‘Gathering’ as church is thus not merely a sociological phenomenon, but an actual encounter and engagement with God. And thirdly, understanding congregational ecclesiology in terms of covenant also recovers a basic conception of the church which does not originate in ‘the will of the people’—as congregational ecclesiology is sometimes perceived—but in God’s choosing of a people to be ruled by Christ. For covenant exists by the grace of God’s promise, and only then by human obedience. In other words, a covenantal understanding of the church allows us to explain the essence of the church (‘gathering’) as a relational concept without its contemporary sound of non-commitment, against which Hauerwas duly warns us (§ 4.3.1.). Thus covenant bypasses Hauerwas’ contemporary representation of voluntarism, since it presumes a ‘willingness’ which is not at the expense of commitment. Rather, covenant appoints the mutual responsibilities of two (unequal) parties.

2. This covenantal understanding of the esse of the church allows Browne subsequently to describe the ordained ministry in line with Ephesians 4:11 as a covenantal gift of Christ to his church, besides the charismatic gifts of the Spirit granted to all, while also recognizing human involvement in the process of ministerial installation. In this way Browne corrects Volf’s one-sided pneumatological approach to ecclesiology in which the difficulty with church hierarchy ends up in an exaggerated

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34 See notably A. van de Beek, Lichaam en Geest van Christus: De theologie van de Heilige Geest en de kerk (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2012), 228: “Het is een expressie van het geloof als vrije keuze van mensen en past daarom precies bij kerken van het arminiaanse type.” ['It is an expression of belief as a free choice of people and therefore fits exactly with Arminian churches'].

35 See Fiddes, Tracks and Traces, 42: “The link, mysterious as it is, between church covenant and the covenant of grace, means that human consent is inseparable from the initiative of God in making the covenant in the first place, and in offering to re-make it when it is broken.”

36 Cf. “To be sure, the church as a community gathers in response to the call of Christ, but it is Christ’s gathering, not the community’s response, that is determinative of the church. Such a covenantal ecclesiology excludes the notion of the church as a merely voluntary society. No one chooses to be a member of the church; one is made a member of the church.” Curtis W. Freeman, Contesting Catholicity: Theology for Other Baptists (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014), 246. I furthermore agree with Jonathan Leeman who recently criticized the contemporary contrasting of ‘relational’ and ‘institutional’ categories in ecclesiology. He rightly denotes the institutional character of a covenantal ecclesiology as a distinct ‘political sphere’ as it exists under the distinct authority of God. See Jonathan Leeman, Political Church: The Local Assembly as Embassy of Christ’s Rule (Studies in Christian Doctrine and Scripture, vol. 2; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016), esp. 39-141.

37 Fascinating is the recent confessional statement at the end of the study of Gert-Jan Roest on the contemporary significance of Christology, which incorporates this mutual aspect of provision and commitment, see his “The Gospel in the Western Context: A Missiological Reading of Christology in Dialogue with Hendrikus Berkhof and Colin Gunton” (PhD dissertation, VU University Amsterdam, 2016), 363-365.
egalitarianism that fails to recognize the two-fold distribution of gifts. Ordained ministry, in that scenario, is then only ‘a gift of leadership’. Yet Browne’s proposal enables us to go beyond such a ‘congregational cramp’ and a fear of inequality, by recognizing the Christological gift of official ministry to the church, without neglecting the general distribution of charismata to every member. Moreover, Browne’s covenantal ecclesiology shows the ordained ministry to be part of Christ’s rule, without replacing the gathering of believers as the only constitutive factor for the existence of the church as a Christocracy. It is regrettable, therefore, that congregational ecclesiologists, such as Volf, too often have troubled themselves with the search for an ‘ecclesial minimum’. Because the exclusion of ordained ministry outside the basic conditions for being church, ensues often in a meager functionalistic approach that neglects to appreciate ordained ministry as a distinctive gift of Christ.

Our retrieval of Browne’s covenantal ecclesiology enables us to re-evaluate the significance of ordained ministry, as Christ’s gift flowing from the very existence of the identity of the church as covenanted community. In this sense, ordained ministers are to be understood as ‘covenantal officials’ or ‘covenantal agents’, whose public ministry is aimed at the sustenance (‘to equip the saints’, Eph. 4:12) of the covenantal bond between Christ and his people explicitly by bringing God’s message. Volf’s reduction of ordained ministry to ‘leadership’ is therefore all the more problematic since it opens up the possibility to approach the ministry from general theories of leadership before having identified its distinct theological character. What is more, aligning ordained ministry exclusively with ‘the gift of leadership’ assumes leadership to be an ‘ordained’ prerogative. However, as Browne directs us, ordained ministry is not about leadership in general, but about the specific kind of leadership that comes by the liturgical practices of Word and sacrament (ministerium verbi). To put it differently, the role of the ordained ministry is a function of these crucial ecclesial practices. It is worthwhile considering Browne’s exposition in A Booke which sheweth (§ 3.4.) in this regard, in which he discusses the need for lively preaching prior to the offices of ordained ministry themselves, suggesting that ordained ministry is not some special category outside God’s covenantal reign but a way by which people enjoy his ‘speaking presence’. Browne therefore understands ordained ministers as a type of the broader covenantal category of ‘messengers’. Like the prophets and the apostles, ordained ministers are the local representations of God’s sending of messengers throughout salvation history. It is the same concept of ministerial continuity which also determines Ephesians 4:7-13, as noted above. Binding the role of ordained ministry so strongly to the Scripture as means of God’s communication puts ordained ministry clearly in a functional perspective. It needs

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38 Cf. “In some Christian circles it is unfashionable to talk much about the ordained ministry, because of the fear of being guilty of elitism, one of contemporary society’s catalogue of unforgivable sins.” Lesslie Newbigin, The Gospel in a Pluralist Society (Grand Rapids/Geneva; Wm. B. Eerdmans/WCC Publications, 1989), 235.
to be stressed, however, that this not necessarily implies a functionalistic understanding. For his emphasis on ordained ministry as part of Christ’s covenantal ruling prevents the pragmatic reduction of ministers to ‘ecclesial employees’ paid to do some routine tasks for the community. It is precisely Brown’s covenantal embedding of the ordained ministry that makes the ministry part of the covenantal relations that constitute the church itself and, thereby, of the covenantal commitment. 39 Ministers are ‘charged’ by Christ and, as such, need to be recognized by the community to be under Christ’s ‘orders’. In this way, Browne directs us to understand the ordained ministry as a particular ministry under ‘covenantal orders’: sent to serve the church’s covenantal relations by Word and sacrament. That is what ultimately is meant with the vocabulary of ‘ordained ministry’; the recognition of the distinctive Christological gift of an ‘order of ministry’ to the serve the covenanted church.

Browne provides us with a covenantal framework to understand Christ’s twofold distribution of gifts to the church (Eph. 4:11-12), which enables us to understand its mutual beneficiary purpose in light of the church’s covenantal participation in Christ. The gift of ordained ministry is given with the covenantal identity of the church and the visible embodiment of Christ’s rule. It is the Christological charge that stands behind this gift that makes it necessary to speak of this ministry as an ‘ordered/ordained’ ministry.

5.2.3. Missio Dei as Defining Ministerial Order

To retrieve Browne’s covenantal thought in the current situation, it has become evident from our readings in Hauerwas’s and Vanhoozer’s literature that the various transitions in the Western world renewed the awareness for the need of mission. Hence, where Browne’s struggle was primarily with the formation of a ‘believer’s church’ in a godly society, today’s struggle is with forming ‘believable churches’ in a largely secular environment. As of consequence, both Hauerwas and Vanhoozer have urged that mission should not only be the center of ecclesiology (missio Dei), but also of the theology of ordained ministry itself (§ 4.2.1-4.2.2.); ordained ministers are called and sent to sustain the church’s participation in God’s own mission to the world. 40 Though ‘mission’ in its contemporary sense did not receive much attention in Browne’s ecclesiology, 41 his focus on the local community fully resounds with their mission-shaped ecclesiology. Moreover, Browne’s use of Ephesians 4:11, which followed the example of the Reformed/Puritan

39 Cf. “The essence of the priesthood is primarily relational (whom it serves) and functional (what it does) more than ontological (what it is),” William H. Willimon, Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 18.

40 See elaborately Avis, A Ministry Shaped by Mission, esp. 1–42.

tradition, had primarily the same function: to locate the role of the ordained ministry not in the ‘will of men’ or in the structures of the civil state, but in God’s provisional care for the church. For the same reason, Hauerwas and Vanhoozer also refer to Ephesians 4:11 to define the official ministry within the spectrum of God’s missional care for the church.

The idea of *missio Dei* has changed our view of the church by emphasizing its ‘instrumental’ nature, over against self-sufficient ecclesiological perceptions. The same shift is also required for our understanding of ordained ministry. Understanding ordained ministry within a *missio Dei* perspective reminds us of the relative importance of a distinct ordained ministry compared to the participation of the church as a whole. I would emphasize the term ‘relative’ even more in this regard, by replacing it with Browne’s concept of ‘covenant’. This, to stress that the importance of ordained ministry rests upon the covenantal bond between Christ and his church. For the church’s participation in God’s mission is a covenantal matter. It is, as also Vanhoozer rightly points out, a response to God’s ‘speaking action’. Being church is defined by obedient response to a divine initiative/invitation and not merely by ‘free choice’ as noted above. In other words, there is no talk of ecclesiology nor of ordained ministry without participation in ‘what God is doing’. Eddy Van der Borght in his *Theology of Ministry* (2006) therefore refers in his study to the *missio Dei* as ‘starting point’. Yet in my view this emphasis on God’s mission may even be stronger. The *missio Dei* should not only be called the point of departure for a theology of the official ministry, as if of a passing nature, but more profoundly its “determining factor”, or *commission*. The *missio Dei* is the ‘order’ that grounds the covenantal role of the ordained ministry. ‘God’s mission’ also denotes the larger whole in which both the ministry of the church and the official ministry of the ordained have their place. It follows that the ministry of the ordained persons arises from the mission of the church and is likewise charged to serve the mission of the church. Paul Avis speaks similarly of “ministry shaped by mission.” Consequently, we conclude that the purpose of ordained ministry is not ‘self-evident’ nor ‘self-sustaining’ but a derivative from the identity of the covenanted church as a community of witness (Hauerwas) or priestly community (McClendon), and ultimately

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42 Cf. “We do not place the ministry in this salvation perspective in order to give it a divine or unassailable aura, but to indicate that the importance of the ministry is only relative.” Eduardus Van der Borght, *Theology of Ministry: A Reformed Contribution to an Ecumenical Dialogue* (SRT, vol. 15; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 414.


44 See John G. Flett, “A Theology of Missio Dei,” *Theology in Scotland* 21, no. 1 (2014): 69. Flett also notes the covenantal character of the *missio Dei*: “But insofar as God causes the covenant between himself and human beings to take place, there we participate in the history in partnership that is the triune life of God himself” (72).

45 Cf. “Whoever uses this ministry to equip the saints for something different than mission is not ministering the Word of God. And whoever thinks that ‘mission’ is an optional ‘extra’, not intrinsically connected with the ministry of the Divine Word, is mistaken.” Stefan Paas, “Prepared for a missionary ministry in 21st century Europe,” *EJT* 20, no. 2 (2011): 122.


47 Avis, A Ministry Shaped by Mission, passim.
from God’s own missionary activity. As the ‘father’ of the missional church movement, Lesslie Newbigin, once wrote: “Men and women are not ordained to this ministerial priesthood in order to take priesthood away from the people, but in order to nourish and sustain the priesthood of the people.”

48 Kevin Vanhoozer’s concept of drama is very helpful in this regard. Portraying ordained ministers as ‘contributing dramaturges’ enables us to both express the distinctive role of ministers within the local church and likewise also its ‘relative’ significance, serving the church’s participatory action as a whole. In short, the role of ordained ministers is not to play the leading role, nor to replace the community, but rather help the church better understand what is required to participate in God’s mission in the concrete circumstances of contemporary life.

Along this double two-way path, Browne’s covenantal reading of Ephesians 4:11 can be retrieved for congregational ecclesiology today, namely by understanding the gift of official ministers in light of the mission of the gifted church as a whole. To refer to Newbigin’s words yet again:

The task of ministry is to lead the congregation as a whole in a mission to the community as a whole, to claim its whole public life, as well as the personal lives of all its people, for God’s rule. It means equipping all the members of the congregation to understand and fulfill their several roles in this mission through their faithfulness in their daily work. It means training and equipping them to be active followers of Jesus in his assault on the principalities and powers which he has disarmed on his cross.

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A thoroughgoing missional understanding of ordained ministry helps us to avoid the pitfalls of clericalism and of functionalism. 50 Every theology of ordained ministry should therefore be missional driven to teach the church to play its role within God’s continuing redemptive engagement with the world. Christ provides his saints with missionary agents, people ‘under orders’ to sustain the church in their joint priestly mission.

5.2.4. Ordained Ministry as Sign of Covenantal Continuity

Our retrieval of Browne’s covenantal concept of ordained ministry has also provided us with a way to understand the notion of ministerial continuity with the apostolic church. Congregational churches generally are wary to make too much of the person of the minister in as much it is quickly associated with a hierarchical concepts of ministry based upon apostolic succession. This has become particularly evident in Charles Spurgeon’s highly functionalistic conception that was an attempt to contrast his evangelistic ministry

with the high church churchmanship of the Oxford Movement which celebrated apostolic succession (§ 1.6.2.). Though Browne heavily critiqued the presumed apostolic privileges of the episcopacy, his whole endeavor for further reformation was—like his Presbyterian contemporaries—entirely aimed at continuity with the apostolic church as depicted in Acts. Accordingly, he envisioned apostolic continuity to occur by way of covenantal obedience. Hence, not the singular ordained minister, but first the congregational community stood in covenantal continuity with the apostolic church by their mutual obedience to live under Christ’s rule. Nevertheless, Browne also understood the ‘gift of ordained ministry’ as a first sign of this covenantal continuity with the apostolic church. This is an interpretation which is consistent with the paradigm we found in Ephesians 4, where Paul confirms the legitimacy of local ministries from the idea of continuity with his own apostolic mission. In this way, ordained ministers are a locally embedded form of ‘messengers’ to serve the church’s covenantal continuity.

1. To retrieve Browne’s idea of covenantal continuity, we need to be aware that his idea of continuity is still exclusively tied to what Nicholas Healy terms a ‘blueprint ecclesiology’.51 Scripture, accordingly, contains a single ecclesiological pattern that is to be ‘copied’ in all times and places. It means that for Browne in his day, covenantal continuity was mostly preserved by a ‘repetitive similarity’ of Biblical times.52 This exclusive interpretation of Scripture has become problematic since, as we note again, the Bible does not contain a detailed ecclesiology nor an elaborate theology of ministry. Hauerwas and Vanhoozer therefore direct us to read Scripture in a more paradigmatic way, which allows for a creative continuity in new circumstances.53 Hauerwas’s idea of ministerial continuity is anchored in the tradition of ‘the story of Israel and Jesus’ in contrast with concepts of ministry relying on the fixed structures of society as in Christendom (§ 4.2.1.). His example shows the significance of the need to express ministerial continuity with the apostolic church amidst the contemporary search for the relevancy of ordained ministry. Accordingly, ministers represent the church’s continuity through the contextual interpretation of community’s shared tradition. Hauerwas’s narrative approach, however, largely neglects the vocabulary of covenant, making the contemporary church more a living memory of what God has done in Biblical times, than

51 Nicholas Healy, Church, World and the Christian Life Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology (CSDC, vol. 7; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 38: “Ecclesiology is not about the business of finding the single right way to think about the church, of developing a blueprint suitable for all times and places. Rather, I propose that its function is to aid the concrete church in performing its tasks of witness and pastoral care within what I will call its ‘ecclesiological context.’”


53 It is interesting that within the English Separatist tradition there emerged a more open reading of Scripture, notably expressed in John Robinson’s famous saying ‘the Lord has more truth and light to break forth from his holy word’. See for an extensive theological reflection Freeman, Contesting Catholicity, 273-309.
an actual act of God today. With as result that apostolic continuity loses its divine anchoring in God’s provisional care as we found in Ephesians 4:11. More helpful, in my opinion, is Vanhoozer’s theo-dramatic understanding as it provides a more appropriate retrieval of Browne’s idea of covenantal continuity. He too prioritizes the church’s committed performance of Scripture’s covenantal drama as the basis upon which a church shares in the same continuing redemptive acts of God as found in Old and New Testament (§ 4.2.2.). In the covenanted church God himself continues his salvation through the very lives of faithful Christians, who continue to reenact the gospel. Again, this is not a repetitive continuity—as in ‘copy-paste’ or blueprint ecclesiologies—but a creative and sensitive improvisation by faithful imagination. As said, it is regrettable that Vanhoozer does not include the ordained minister more expressively in his covenantal understanding of the church.

2. In recent decades the theological value of covenantal continuity has been restated, especially since it enables us to overcome a supersessionist understanding of the church. Covenantal continuity acknowledges the constitutive reality of God’s history with the people of Israel, and avoids the language of succession. Notably, Kendall Soulen reminds us of the unifying, yet differentiating force of covenanting: “God’s promise places the entire history that is about to unfold between the Lord, Israel, and the nations under the programmatic sign of God’s covenant blessing.”54 It is an ‘economy of mutual blessing’ which always assumes distinction, between God and creation, between Israel and the nations, between the Levitic priesthood and the other tribes, the priesthood of Israel and the priesthood of the church. Thus our understanding of the church as a ‘communal priesthood’ can therefore not be viewed independently from the priesthood of Israel. The church shares in the identity of Israel through their communal obedience in recognition of Jesus’ Messiahship.55 Yet, once we have acknowledged this ‘derivative’ reality of the church’s priestly existence, we also need to recognize that Israel too included a separate priesthood embodied in the Levitic tribe to remind the entire people of their divine calling. Likewise, as Hauerwas rightly pointed at, the gift of ordained ministry is a distinctly ministerial order that serves as a sign of the church’s covenantal continuity with the apostolic church and the people of Israel. They are personnel gifts as embodiments of God’s promised blessing to sustain covenantal fellowship and live as his ‘priestly kingdom’ (cf. Ex. 19:5-6; 1 Pet. 2:7-11). This assumes a distinction between an official ministry and the charismatic congregation, between the ordained ministry in the church

55 See Bakker, “Tangible Church (I),” 13-14. Though he speaks in this regard of ‘messianic catholicity’ he is mostly concerned with the church’s historical continuity concerning the people of Israel: “A Church without this Jewish Messiah is a Church without a past, and hence a Church without historical spiritual identity and gestalt. Such a Church in my estimation should be typified as a docetic Church, a ghost Church, a community hanging in the air of shared creative imagination.” (14).
and the priestly ministry of the church to the world. Without aiming to argue for an ordained ministry in exclusive priestly terms, I do want to emphasize role of ordained ministers as ‘signs’ of the covenantal continuity whereby the church’s shares in God’s continuing work once already initiated with the people of Israel. Through the presence of ordained ministers, the church is reminded of its covenantal existence.

In summary, it can be stated that ‘the ministerial continuity of ordained ministry’ does not rest on a passing over of apostolic consecration, but—as Browne reminds us—by God’s sovereign promise of covenantal provision as testified by Ephesians 4:11. Ordained ministers are signs of the church’s continuity with the people of Israel and the apostolic church. Browne’s covenantal understanding provides us with theological concepts that bridge the biblical narrative and today’s reality of local communities into one ‘missional act’ of God. Ministerial continuity is thereby part and parcel of the missio Dei. As the church participates in God’s mission to the world by its covenantal relations, it is God who provides his missionary embassy called ‘church’ with agents to sustain them in their practice.

5.2.5. Ordained Ministry as Expression and Means of Catholicity

Our reading of Hauerwas and Vanhoozer has put the importance of catholicity right back on the agenda, especially with regard to the ordained ministry. Catholicity has never been the strong suit of congregational ecclesiology, partly because of its easy association with Roman-Catholicism, but mostly because of the disproportionate focus on the local community. Though I haste to note that ‘catholicity’ as such was not high on Browne’s ‘Separatist’ agenda, it would be incorrect to align his separation with mere sectarianism or isolationism. For his idea of covenantal continuity allows us to stretch and go further to acknowledge a local embedded ‘order of ministry’. This, without isolating its significance within the temporal and geographical boundaries of the local church, as Spurgeon and Volf propose (§ 1.6.2. and § 1.6.3.), but as an expression and means of the church’s catholicity. While the act of covenanting was indeed temporally and locally rooted, he also acknowledged its binding consequences in relation to other communities, as might be inferred from his appreciation of the synodical structure. In these larger meetings, also the locally ordained ministry continued to have a role. It follows that a local covenant was not a closed entity, but a platform for Christ’s unifying presence, not only with the Biblical story but also with other churches of different times and places. Through the act of covenanting under Christ’s Lordship a gathered community transcends time and locality and is connected with what God is doing in many places and

56 Cf. Stefan Paas, Vreemdelingen en Priesters: Christelijke missie in een postchristelijke omgeving (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2015), esp. 197-204.
through many ages.\textsuperscript{57} In this way, I think, Browne’s concept of covenant can be akin to catholicity.

Catholicity is about the rule of Christ realized through communities of different times and places. Though I do not wish to follow a direct identification of catholicity with Paul’s concept of πληρώμα (‘fullness’) in Ephesians (1:10, 23, 3:19, 4:10, 13), as often suggested,\textsuperscript{58} including also Volf and McClendon,\textsuperscript{59} I do think that catholicity denotes the qualifying effect of Christ’s ruling presence (\textit{dominium Christi}). Ignatius of Antioch, generally acknowledged to be the first to speak of the catholicity of the church, uses catholicity as a Christological and qualitative mark of the church, primarily connected to the visible elements of orthodox teaching (‘incarnational Christology’), the eucharist and the bishop.\textsuperscript{60} It is in this way that we need to understand Ignatius’s famous phrase: ‘Wherever the bishop appears, there let the congregation be; just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the whole church’ (καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία, \textit{Ad Smyrneos} 8:2).\textsuperscript{61} It is an allusion to Browne’s central text Matthew 18:20,\textsuperscript{62} where Christ promises to be present in the reconciling gathering of believers (cf. Eph. 3:4-6). Catholicity is thus about the real presence of Christ’s rule through reconciliation, as also Hauerwas indicates (§ 4.2.1.). It is a ‘relational’ or ‘reconciliatory’ concept. The problem with the contemporary preoccupation with Paul’s ‘fullness’ phrase is that it primarily is orientated toward an abstract and pre-existent invisible reality of God’s fullness. Catholicity is, however, not

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\textsuperscript{57} Cf. Freeman, \textit{Contesting Catholicity}, 234: “A retrieval of covenant theology offers the promise of an ecumenical vision by conceiving of an ecclesial openness to and a historical continuity with the whole people of God throughout the world and the ages.” Paul Fiddes also confirms the relatedness of covenant and catholicity. Like Browne, he connects catholicity to the (universal) covenant of grace. Unclear, however, is his identification of the covenant of grace with the concept of the universal church, see \textit{Tracks and Traces}, 32.

\textsuperscript{58} A notable exception is Hans Küng, who already in 1967 pronounced his discontent with this interpretation in his \textit{The Church} (London: Burn & Oates, 1967), 297: “The highly artificial attempts to deduce these meanings from the texts are all the more unconvincing, since the word ‘catholic’ does not have this meaning in the secular writings of the time. Historically speaking there is no bridge between the use of the word ‘pleroma’ in Ephesians 1:23 and the ‘ecclesia catholica’ of the early Christian period.”


some characteristic that denotes God in se, but it is the mark of the church (nota ecclesiae) as the Christological reality of concrete people gathering under his Lordship. Catholicity is ‘what happens’ when Christ is present in his ‘fullness’ as Ruler of the concrete gathering of believers—as also described in Ephesians 4:11. I therefore regard Browne’s concept of covenant a better theological ‘vehicle’ to understand the catholicity of the local church, considering that it expresses better how the unity with Christ ‘takes place’. Catholicity is indeed the presence of Christ’s ‘fullness of salvation’ as Volf says, but not independently of the concrete covenantal practices of forgiveness and reconciliation among faithful believers. Catholicity is about the story of Christ embodied and reenacted in the covenanted church. In this way, as Hauerwas notes, catholicity shapes the church into a priestly community in God’s mission to the world (§ 4.2.1.).

As such, it follows, that the ordained ministry can be an expression and means of the church’s catholicity as suggested by Hauerwas and Vanhoozer (§ 4.2.1. and 4.2.2.). Not that the presence of ordained ministry constitutes the catholicity of a local church, but, even so, its presence is a manifestation of Christ’s ruling presence, as ministers are his first gifts; visible and tangible expressions of his Christocracy. Where Christ gathers his catholic church, there he will send his ‘messengers’. In this sense, the ordained ministry is a means by which Christ nourishes ‘to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ’ (Eph. 4:13). The ordained ministry sustains the church in its covenantal faithfulness to Christ since they are, surely, the ones responsible for the ‘catholic practices’ of Word and sacrament, as also Browne recalls (§ 3.8.). Through the ministerium verbi the church is reminded of the reconciling reality of Christ to renew its covenantal identity through mutual discipline, and able to celebrate its covenantal connection to different communities across times and places. Ordained ministers provide what Vanhoozer calls ‘catholic direction’ (§ 4.2.2.). An ordained minister enjoins the local church with the Christian faith (depositum fidei), found in creeds and confessions; shows its significance in different circumstances from the particular viewpoint of the church’s tradition; and is, above all, ‘ordered’ to “test the church’s current witness by the canon of the saints.” In other words, the ordained minister is a

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63 See Dulles, The Catholicity of the Church, 30-67. In this sense, he explains the church’s catholicity as a derivative of the ‘real’ in the triune God (‘catholicity from above’), which is then made present in the world (‘catholicity from below’): “The catholicity of the Church is a more intense participation in the divine catholicity.” (168).

64 Cf. “Es besagt auf die Kirche angewendet: sie hat einen Charakter, kraft dessen sie immer und überall dieselbe und in dieser Selbigkeit auch immer und überall erkennbar, zu deren Wahrung immer und überall verpflichtet ist.” Karl Barth, KD, IV/1, 783.

65 See Volf, After Our Likeness, 266.

66 Cf. Ignatius’s call preceding his reference to catholicity: “You must all follow the bishop as Jesus Christ (followed) the Father, and (follow) the presbytery as the apostles; respect the deacons as the commandment of God. Let no one do anything apart from the bishop that has to do with the church. Let that be regarded as a valid eucharist which is held under the bishop or to whomever he entrusts it.” (Ad Smyrneos, 8, 1). Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, 238.

67 Willimon, Pastor, 19-20. Cf. “he or she still has the responsibility of linking the particular congregation, as a manifestation of the body of Christ, to the gospel and mission of the whole body, opening its horizons beyond its own
means to help a local gathering understand itself as ‘a church catholic’, a peopled place where Christ’s rules, as well as unites, different people into one covenant.

I conclude, therefore, that catholicity is not primarily the mark of an invisible universal church, carried by the abstract idea of ‘fullness’. Even so, it marks the local church as a covenantal reality of God’s ecclesial whole that transcends time and place. It is Christ’s involvement in the local church as a ‘catholic whole’ in which his presence simultaneously unifies local churches as the whole church. The official ministry of the ordained is an expression and means of this catholicity, whose ministry is directed to help the local church to understand themselves in light of this transcendent reconciliatory mission of God. By the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments, notably the Lord’s Supper/eucharist, a minister actualizes the covenantal identity of the gathered community as a church of Christ.

5.2.6. A Call for ‘Order’

This paragraph opened with the reiteration of our first criterion: to determine Browne’s contribution to the development of a contemporary theology of ordained ministry. Every theology of ordained ministry should serve the community’s identity as a priestly-people in the world. This criterion intends to prevent us from surrendering ourselves to concepts of ordained ministry that paralyze the church’s missionary vocation in the world. We can conclude by now, that Browne’s covenantal approach not only complies with our criterion, but moreover, provides a viable way to formulate a distinct congregational theology of ordained ministry precisely in light of the communal priesthood. His covenantal reading of Ephesians 4:11 locates congregational ecclesiology firmly within the wider Reformed search for a Biblical church—yet aspiring a more critical stance toward the civil state’s interference with ecclesial affairs. For Browne, ordained ministers were a gift of Christ to serve the local gathering of the faithful to live as a covenanted church. It follows that if the church is to exist as a communal priesthood, it needs this special order of ministry, who represent Christ’s continual provision to his covenanted community. In other words, the order of ordained ministry serves the communal priesthood of all believers in the world. The Free Church tradition would do well to recover this distinct ‘order of ordained ministry’ to help the church to discover what it means to serve Christ in a post-Christendom era. A story that exemplifies the importance of an ordained ministry that recognizes its distinctive calling is the ministry of Frits Slomp, also known as ‘Frits the Drifter’. The reason for retelling this story here, is to vivify the crucial importance of an ordained ministry that understands itself under Christ’s ‘orders’ and not of national politics or the majority vote, but conscious of its particular calling in relation to the mission of the church.

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local concerns.” Paul S. Fiddes, Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 87-88; also Freeman, Contesting Catholicity, 240-241.
THE STORY OF FRTS THE DRIFTER

In the 1930's Fredrik (Frits) Slomp (1898-1978) ministered a small church in Heemse in Overijssel, the central-eastern part of the Netherlands. Due to the proximity of Germany—only a few miles away—and his friendship with some German pastors he met during his time as a student, he witnessed already from an early date the rise of National Socialism, also within its churches. He quickly became convinced of its devastating effects upon the church's witness of the gospel. Tirelessly he preached against National Socialism, even going across the border with Germany, where he led church services in Emlichheim and Nordhorn. Even after 1937, when a ban was issued prohibiting Dutch ministers from preaching in Germany, he continued preaching during illegal meetings. On July 13, 1942, Slomp had to go seek hiding himself after a sermon preached in Zwolle because of his ongoing call for sabotage against the German Labor Service (Arbeitsdienst). Still, this did not stop him from fulfilling his preaching ministry and continued in secret, traveling extensively through occupied Holland. 'Drifting' from place to place, he relied on two memorized sermons: one on the brave midwives Sifra and Pua (Ex. 1:15-21) who resisted pharao's command, and one on Christ's promise of the destruction of evil (Luc. 10:18). Everywhere he came, he passionately admonished and encouraged people to withstand the oppressor by providing shelter for Jews and others who desperately needed a hiding place. He and his family themselves gave shelter to a young Jewish woman, Rachel de Leeuw, in order to prevent her arrest and transport to a concentration camp. His itinerant preaching efforts eventually earned him his nickname 'Frits the Drifter'. Through his sermonizing Slomp helped to build a network that eventually developed into the Landelijke Organisatie voor Hulp aan Onderduikers ('National Organization for Help to Those in Hiding', or simply LO.). In 1943, this organization became part of the National Resistance Organisation. Slomp himself, however, was accidentally arrested on May 1, 1944, by the military police who mistakenly took him for an escaped Jew. During his arrest he carried a typed copy of his brochure Mogen wij zoo verder gaan? ('May We Thus Continue?') intended for printing and


69 He earlier had his hair dyed black to avoid detection, yet thereby also gaining a more 'Jewish' appearance. See Kaajan, "Nieuw licht op arrestatie en bevrijding van Frits de Zwerver in mei 1944," 260-261.
distribution. In this document Slomp not only expresses his dissatisfaction with
the lack of adequate preaching against Nazism by his colleagues, but with the
ecclesial turmoil within the Reformed Church involving professor Klaas Schilder
from Kampen. Rather than busying themselves over dogmatic disputes, he
stated that the church should be organizing prayer meetings because of the
persecution of Jews. After his arrest, Slomp was brought to a renowned prison
in Arnhem, the Koepelgevangenis. Yet, because of his prominence in the Dutch
Resistance he was already rescued on May 11, even before the German
authorities could figure out Slomp’s true identity. Subsequently, he and his
entire family had to seek hiding until the liberation of Overijssel in April 1945.
After the war, Frits Slomp devoted himself—besides his further church
ministries—to the pastoral care of people who formerly colluded with the Nazi
oppressors, but also the disadvantaged and poor. Significant was also his refusal
to receive a royal decoration for his efforts during the war. For he reasoned, ‘how
can I properly meet the family of war victims, wearing a medal on my chest?’

Only in 1997 another tract was recovered by his son, in which Frits
Slomp discusses the relationship between church and state, including the role of
the ordained ministry. In this unpublished pamphlet, probably written
somewhere in the Spring of 1945, only weeks or months before the liberation of
the Netherlands, he denounces the impartial attitude of the Reformed churches
and ministers who consciously avoided to address the political situation in their
sermons:

For many church and politics are ‘two’. Certainly, church and state are
two. But the church has to do with all aspects of life, including political
life. She must let the light of God’s Word fall onto every sphere of life.
Where life is found, it must come under the authority of God’s Word.
In our time a ‘pagan’ worldview revealed itself in National Socialism
which was so overwhelming that it was choking all true life. Is then the
church not called to fight those great dangers by preaching God’s
Word? Yes, indeed. This would already be the case if National Socialism
was just a political movement, but it is twice [as strong] since it also
concerns a worldview [which is] totalitarian, all-inclusive, in its design
and purpose. The whole life, that is, where life reveals itself, must exist
to magnify the state. Moral requirements do not exist; ‘good’ is what
serves and edifies the state. National Socialism is [therefore] in direct
conflict with all of [Biblical] law and with every single
commandment.—You would expect, therefore, that the church would

70 See for its entire text Kaajan, “Frits de Zwerver over kerk, politiek en piëtisme (1945),” 36-49.
To Slomp ‘National Socialism’ represented not only a political movement, but a real ‘pagan’ religion, and therefore, idolatry. And so he poses the question: “Can it be comprehended that many church officers in their official ministry pretended if it did not exist?”72 The church, accordingly, was not only called to be merely a place of personal edification and comfort but also a means in the world to propagate the Kingdom of God. He writes:

Now, preaching has to be more aimed at extracting people from that selfish, egocentric, and pietist sphere, and make them—by placing them under God’s blessing—to become Calvinists, warriors for His glory; to become people called by God to be missionaries, evangelists; to become people who are not appointed by Hitler, but by God to be political apostles amidst our nation.73

Slomp clearly understood his own ministry and that of his colleagues a divine means to enable the church to live up to its calling. Ministers were called to be God’s ‘agents’ of a different regime, encouraging Christians to be agents themselves and serve the glory of God as his missionaries, representing the politics of a different Kingdom.

Slomp’s ministry before and during WOII testifies what is means to recognize the ordained ministry as commissioned by Christ. Christians were not called to passively endure the occupation, but actively continue the mission of the church. Like Robert Browne, Slomp also called upon his colleagues to take their ‘order’ seriously and preach the message of the gospel, reminding people of God’s rule in Christ in the midst of the apparent opposite. Of course, where

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71 “Kerk en politiek zijn voor velen twee. Zeer zeker, kerk en staat zijn twee. Maar de kerk heeft te maken met het gehele leven, ook met het politieke leven. Ze moet het licht van Gods Woord laten vallen op elk levensterrein. Waar leven is, moet dat leven komen onder beslag van Gods Woord. En nu openbaarde zich in het nationaal socialisme een levensbeschouwing die heidens is, en die zoo zeer de overhand kreeg, [dat ze] alle werkelijk leven ging verstikken. Is de kerk nu niet geroepen om met Gods Woord, in de prediking die groote gevaren te bestrijden? Ja zeker. Dat geldt ook al, al was het nationaal socialisme alleen maar een politieke beweging, maar het geldt wel dubbel, daar het ook is een levens- en wereldbeschouwing. Totalitair, alles omvattend, is in opzet en doel. Het gehele leven, d.w.z. waar het leven zich ook maar openbaart, moet leven om de staat groot te maken. Normen zijn er niet: dat is goed wat de staat dient en bouwt. Het nationaal socialisme is met de gehele wet en met elk gebod afzonderlijk in vierkanten strijd.—Men zou verwacht hebben, dat de kerk [het] in de prediking, in het catechetisch onderwijs, in haar ambtelijken arbeid zou bestreden hebben.”

72 “Is het te begrijpen dat veel kerkelijke ambtsdragers in hun ambtelijk werk deden alsof het niet bestond?”

73 “Nu moet de prediking er meer op gericht zijn om de menschen uit die egoïstische, egocentrische, pietistische spheer uit te halen en ze onder Gods zegen te maken tot calvinisten, tot strijders voor Zijn eer, tot mensen, die door God geroepen zijn tot zendingsmensen, evangelisatiemensen, tot mensen, die niet door Hitler, maar door God zijn aangewezen om te zijn de politieke apostelen van ons volk.”
Browne in his time emphasized the difference between church and state to prevent state politics from governing the church, Slomp rather emphasized that a separation of church and state did not imply a separation of Christian belief and politics. Rather, Christians were called to proclaim the politics of the gospel and act accordingly, by taking a stance against National Socialism. And as such, Slomp’s ministry witnesses why the church needs this special order of ministry, Christ’s gift of ordained ministry. Not to replace the ministry of the whole community, but rather to strengthen the priestly and prophetic mission of the church and help it discern what is best (Phil. 1:10) in different times.

5.3. Criterion 2: Permanent Accountability

The second criterion that guides our retrieval of Browne’s theology is permanent accountability: a theology of ordained ministry should explain a continual accountability to God as sovereign Lord and to his church as body of accountability. Accountability is a major theme in congregational ecclesiology as it is a direct expression of its understanding of the church as a ‘gathering of disciples’ who are called to sustain each other in their common discipleship under Christ’s Lordship. Accountability, therefore, denotes the character of the community of the church as dependent upon God’s sovereign rule. Precisely because of this emphasis on accountability, tension is felt with the recognition of ordained ministry, since a special category of ministry is believed to presuppose a form of superior and autonomous authority that is independent from the community, as evidently present in the critiques of McClendon and Spurgeon (§ 1.6.1 and § 1.6.2.). This tension is only strengthened by the postmodern turn in contemporary culture in which institutional authorities are generally met with distrust (§ 1.4.). The constitutive nature of congregational ecclesiology as communal discipleship makes that ministerial authority can never be beyond reproach, nor indelible to congregational correction. In fact, a proper theology of ordained ministry should explain the consistency between a minister’s moral life and his official role within the communal priesthood.

In order to describe Browne’s contribution to the present criterion, I will first discuss the issue of ministerial authority in relation to Ephesians 4:11 in § 5.3.1. Subsequently, in § 5.3.2. Browne’s covenantal embedding of ministerial authority and accountability will be discussed on the basis of his wording of ‘sending’ and ‘reception’. Next, in sections § 5.3.3. to § 5.3.6, I will develop his covenantal initiative further, with regard to Christological representation and the unity of the church, the prophetic authority, accountability and discipleship, and also the issue of Donatism we have encountered. This section will be concluded with a plea for vulnerable authority in § 5.3.7., which, like my previous ‘call for order’, will be accompanied by a testimony, in this case Amsterdam’s pioneering minister Margrietha Reinders.
5.3.1. Revisiting Ephesians 4:11

We have already argued that the text of Ephesians 4:11 calls for a distinct gift of Christ in the form of ministers in line with Paul’s own apostolic ministry. A pattern which is recognized prominently by Robert Browne who took this text as an important source to denote the distinctive nature of ordained ministry. In other words, these ministries have a divine legitimation within God’s ongoing mission (missio Dei) to support the participation of the whole church. Ephesians 4:11 thus stands as an instruction regarding the authoritative position of these ministries in relation to the community of saints. Notions of ministerial authority, however, always touch sensitive spots within congregational ecclesiology and in contemporary culture as a whole—as we’ve said—seeing that it is quickly associated with hierarchical superiority and abuse of power. From which follows our present question: How can Paul’s exposition in the letter of Ephesians help our understanding of ministerial authority today? More specifically, how did Paul envision the authoritative ministries of verse 12 to correspond to his previous emphasis on corporate unity (Eph. 4:1-6)? And also, in what way does his concept of ministerial authority differ from the self-sustained, dominating and coercive forms of power in his day that were characteristic for Roman institutions of authority?

1. It is important to observe that the entire Ephesian letter presents Christ as the ultimate authority ‘far above all rule and authority and power and dominion’ (Eph. 1:21). There is, accordingly, no authority in creation which is not dependent on, or not subservient to, Christ’s rule. It is especially within the church that this ‘cosmic rule’ of Christ is most visibly realized (Eph. 1:22-23). Hence, Geurt Henk van Kooten’s comment: “In fact, the ecclesiology of Eph is merely a function of its cosmic Christology.” Thus the church itself exists by authority, specifically Christ’s authority. It is significant, for our question at hand, to note that the ‘gift of official ministry’ is particularly attached to this cosmic authority of the ascended and exalted Christ (Eph. 4:8-10; Ps. 68:18; Ps. 68:19 MT; Ps. 67:19 LXX). This interpretative reference to Psalm 68:18, preceded by the

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74 For a further exposition of Paul’s apostolic authority in relation to Ephesians, see Ernest Best, Essays on Ephesians (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 25-50.
75 See Lincoln, Ephesians, xc-xci; and notably Brannon, The Heavenlies in Ephesians, esp. 115-125, 199-218.
76 Van Kooten, Cosmic Christology in Paul and the Pauline School, 179; also Lincoln, Ephesians, xci, 268.
77 For the exegetical difficulties surrounding the reversal of the wording of Psalm 68:18 (‘receiving gifts among men,’ MT) in Ephesians 4:8 (‘he gave gifts to men’), see Timothy G. Gombis, “Cosmic Lordship and Divine Gift-Giving: Psalm 68 in Ephesians 4:8,” NovT 47, no. 4 (2005): 367-380. There is some discussion about the origin of the format of the quotation of Psalm 68:18, since it does not follow either the LXX nor the MT text. Frank Thielman, in his commentary, writes that the introductory phrase (δι ὸ λέγει, cf. 5:14) is peculiar for Pauline literature, especially as it does not identify the source of the quotation. It is conceivable, that the author of Ephesians referred to a Jewish exegetical tradition on Ps. 68:18, which is also apparent in the Targum on this text (cf. Larkin, Ephesians, 74-75). According to Thielman the weight of the evidence indicates that Paul himself changed the text somewhat to suit his argument. See Thielman, Ephesians, 264-268. Another debate is concerned with the meaning of the Christological implications of ‘descended into the lower regions’ (εἰς τὰ κατώτερα τῆς γῆς, Eph. 4:9), which is by some explained as a reference to Hades (Larkin, Ephesians, 76; and Thielman, Ephesians, 268-272), the incarnation/earth (Bruce, The Epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians, 343-344; Kooten, Cosmic Christology in Paul and the Pauline School, 185n70; Sellin, Der Brief an die Epheser, 295
introductory phrase ‘therefore it says’ (διὸ λέγει, Eph. 4:8), serves to strengthen the Christological dimension of this provision in order to support the church’s unity and spiritual growth. It is the risen Christ—the one who triumphed over his enemies, as Paul interprets Psalm 68—who establishes his ministries in the church, and thereby sustains the unity of the church. In this way the presence of ordained ministry reminds us of him, the ‘ascended Christ’ (Eph. 4:8, 10), who reigns his church ex cathedra. The provision of ministries clearly is not to replace the rule of Christ, but rather to make his reign manifest. The emphasis in the text is on the activity of Christ, his mission, which is directed toward ‘the equipment of all saints’. Hence, the listed ministries are depicted as ‘instruments’ in Christ’s missional reign, with the purpose to equip the saints pending on the attainment of the fullness in Christ (Eph. 4:13). Again, a contrast emerges with Miroslav Volf’s proposal, as he locates ordained ministry exclusively within a pneumatological scheme (§ 1.6.3.). Too often the Christological emphasis of Ephesians 4:11-12 is exchanged for an exclusive pneumatological framework, evaporating the distinct role of the ordained ministry. Notably Timothy Gombis warns us, by contrast, not to conflate the role of Christ with that of the Spirit in Ephesians 4. Though the Spirit is mentioned in verse 3, the focus of verses 7-16 is “on the ascended Christ and his giving of gifts to the church.” This means for us, that Browne’s Christological approach to ordained ministry (§ 3.8.)—which we also found in Hauerwas and Vanhoozer’s contemporary proposals (§ 4.5.), resonates with Paul’s argument in Ephesians.

A Christological understanding of ministerial authority, however, does not automatically entail a self-sustaining, untouchable and uncontrollable power as is often suggested. Rather, Paul’s rooting of the gift of official ministry within his cosmic Christology is aimed to express its limitations and dependence. Ministerial authority receives legitimacy only insofar a minister participates in the rule of Christ and reflects it. From this perspective we can understand why Paul explains the gift of official ministry

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79 Thielman, Ephesians, 273.
80 The same applies to proposals which suggest a reconnection to Trinitarian theology to formulate a theology of ordained ministry, see for example Almatine Leene, Trinititeit, antropologie en ecclesiologie: Een kritisch onderzoek naar de implicatien van de godsleer voor de positive van mannen en vrouwen in de kerk (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 2013).
82 See Gombis, “Cosmic Lordship and Divine Gift-Giving,” 371: “The Spirit and Christ, therefore, work together in Ephesians, but are not identical.” Cf. Thielman, Ephesians, 269: “and yet in Ephesians the work of Christ and the work of the Spirit are kept separate.”
as an instrument to further and to sustain the church’s unity. Ministerial authority is thus presented as a ‘Christological gift’, as part of Christ’s cosmic rule, ‘for building up the body of Christ’ (Eph. 4:12). Sydney Page, in his elaborate article on this text, writes in similar words:

They [the apostles and prophets] were the recipients of divine revelation and they provided the church with authoritative teaching to guide its faith and practice. Given the special role that Eph. 2:20 ascribes to the apostles and prophets, it is natural to see the upbuilding in Eph. 4:12 as the consequence of the teaching ministry of the apostles and prophets and their successors.

Page points out that the authoritative context in which we find Ephesians 4:11 should not be read as a general ministerial warrant, but as specifically in the sense of a ‘teaching authorization’ in order to sustain the church’s unity and maturity (Eph. 4:3, 13), and to prevent instability and dissention (Eph. 4:14). It follows that—as the church is the place where Christ’s (cosmic) rule is already reality in anticipation of the fulfillment of the rest of the cosmos (Eph. 1:22-23)—Christ installs his church with ministries to “ensure that the church is properly trained and prepared for such task.” Ministerial authority is thus a Christological ‘institution’ oriented toward the church’s spiritual maturation and the extension of Christ’s visible rule in the world.

2. The relation between the church’s social identity and the Christ-instituted ministries is further confirmed in Barentsen’s study of Ephesians, as he writes that Paul portrays “the giving of people in certain leadership positions (Eph. 4:7, 11),” in view of the “superordinate nature of Christian social identity.” It implies that the presence of ministerial authority is part and parcel of the Christological identity of the whole ecclesial community, as a vital means to “maintain the unity of the congregation and the clarity of Christian social identity faithfully.” Consequently, the authority of the listed ministries should not be viewed in contrast with the communal dimension of the church but rather as an embodiment of their shared identity in God’s mission in Christ (Eph. 1:9-12). ‘Institutional authority’ is thus not some post-biblical development by which the New

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86 Van Kooten, Cosmic Christology in Paul and the Pauline School, 187; also Lincoln, “Ephesians,” 138.

87 Barentsen, Emerging Leadership in the Pauline Mission, 150.

88 Barentsen, Emerging Leadership in the Pauline Mission, 178.

89 “Evangelists, pastors, and teachers are portrayed as divinely legitimated leaders, maintaining the unity of the community amidst social change.” Barentsen, Emerging Leadership in the Pauline Mission, 152.
Testament concept of charismatic egalitarianism and charismatic power disappeared, but an inherent part of the Christological nature of the church. “By explaining ministerial authority from the perspective of Christology,” writes Barentsen, “Paul aimed to reinterpret the existent Roman leadership hierarchies characterized by superiority and power in terms of a Christological benefaction.” It is a translation of the Christological identity of the Ephesian community into social action that is significantly different from the surrounding culture. Just like the often misprized household roles (Haustafeln) in Ephesians 4:17-6:9 should not to be taken as a sheer accommodation to wider society, but emphatically as a Christological transformation of society’s prescribed roles to fit the church’s mission: “The goal is neither social withdrawal nor social integration but appropriate identity performance before an audience of both ingroup and outgroup members.” In short, Paul’s argument concerning the gift of official ministry is a practical example of how ministerial authority sustains ‘the saints’ in their Christological identity (Eph. 4:12). With this Christological depiction of authority, Paul enabled the Ephesian Christians to live distinctively as ‘Christian’ within their specific social and cultural context. Though the moral life of the ministries is not explicitly mentioned, Barentsen, in his book on Pauline leadership, does suggest that the local leadership implied in Ephesians 4 notably included prototypical members who came most probably “from the ranks of householders of higher social status, since they provided facilities and benefits for groups meeting in their house as well as for the overall community. Thus, the local leadership group in Ephesus most likely arose from among the householders with exemplary behavior who were loyal to Paul’s teaching.” These ministers did not come from outside the congregation: they were, first of all, group members who were then recognized as ministerial gifts. It was their life of discipleship coupled with their social and intellectual abilities that made them suitable for the special ministry. It seems almost an understatement to say that moral requirements are an essential part of the message of letter to the Ephesians. The recurring use of the verb περιπατέω (‘to walk, to conduct oneself’) appears throughout the letter (Eph. 2:2, 10; 17; 5:2, 8, 15) and, not unimportantly, also in the opening sentence of our section (Eph. 4:1). These ministries

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are not only given the task of teaching the gospel by mouth, but also to embody this truth by their very lives.

We can conclude, therefore, that although Ephesians does not explicitly amplify a balanced idea of authority and accountability, it does assume a communal idea of ministerial authority which is not ‘possessed’ by a few, but is rather a gift to the whole church and bound to Christ’s supreme authority to represent the life that fits the Christian calling. Ministerial authority is thus, first of all, both Christologically rooted as well as communally embedded, thus representing the community’s corporate identity in Christ. And second, that ministerial authority is exercised in the building up of the church, which means, teaching the community the implications of their shared identity in Christ for everyday life.

**5.3.2. Browne’s Contribution 2: Christological Sending and Communal Reception**

Our reading in Ephesians offered us a distinct Christian way of appreciating the concept of ministerial authority, which largely resonates with the Christological approach we already encountered in Browne’s literature. It should be remembered though—certainly in view of today’s fear of clericalism—that Browne’s coupling of ordained ministry and Christology was emphatically aimed at counteracting the suppressive meddling of civil authorities and its associated episcopal hierarchy in local parish affairs. Browne knew only too well that human authority should be limited to keep it from becoming mere tyranny (§ 3.5.2.). This fear of tyranny was already a returning cry in his Cambridge context (§ 2.3.3.-§ 2.3.5.). Like the Presbyterians, he considered the English bishops essentially minions of the state, since they did not hesitate to use civil means to enforce ecclesial regulations upon local parishes. In contrast, Browne developed a theology of ordained ministry embedded in the covenantal nature of the local church as expression of the church’s participation in Christ’s rule. Precisely for this reason, Browne’s covenantal understanding of ministerial authority could be a meaningful contribution to contemporary congregational ecclesiology, since ‘covenant’ joins together both the Christological and communal side we found in Ephesians, and thus keep the middle between hierarchical indelibility and egalitarian evaporation.96

1. Browne’s covenantal approach led him to locate ministerial authority firmly within the local community by explaining Christological and the communal side of ordained ministry in terms of sending and reception (§ 3.8.). ‘Sending’ primarily involves the Christological charge (‘charged and authorized by God’), also identified as the inward vocation by which a person is called to be a messenger of Christ. It echoes quite accurately the institutional idea of ministerial authority as found in Ephesians, namely that a minister’s authority originates in Christ’ sending and not first in an ‘autonomous

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election’ by the church. From our contemporary readings in Hauerwas and Vanhoozer it appears most vital to retrieve this idea of Christological charge since it explains why ministerial office is a *vocation* and not a ‘helping profession’.97 On the other hand, Browne’s Christological framing of ministerial authority prevents us from seeing ministerial authority as an independent and self-sufficient power, since a messenger is only ‘authoritative’ insofar as she or he faithfully conveys the entrusted message. A messenger’s authority stands or falls with authentic witness to the proper authority being Christ. In this way, Browne is able to appreciate ordained ministers as people who are charged by Christ ‘to do the Lord’s message’ and even function as his ‘mouth’ (§ 3.2.2. and § 3.4.2.). Precisely because a minister is ‘only human’, he or she requires to act upon the authority of Christ.98 Official ministry—therefore—needs to be rooted in Christological representation to indicate that it is actually Christ who governs the ordained ministry and to whom every minister is accountable. Christological representation, accordingly, is thus not necessarily a matter of ontology (residing with a ministers’ physical being) as Charles Spurgeon presumed and contested (§ 1.6.2.). Yet neither should a minister’s representation of Christ be therefore reduced to certain activities (a minister’s particular doings) as Spurgeon himself advocated. Such a ‘clean cut’ between a minister’s office and personality would essentially bypass moral accountability. A retrieval of Browne’s concept will enable us to bind the Christological representation to a minister’s intermediary role (as ‘covenantal agent’) within the covenantal bond of Christ to his church, so that office and life are held together. It is important to stress that this agency for Browne does not imply a form of vicarious substitution.99 Rather, the Christological framing of ordained ministry is precisely aimed to place the minister within the sphere of accountability. A one-sided pneumatic approach that locates the ordained ministry solely within the Spirit’s activity, misses the accountability framework expressed by the concept of Christological representation that binds the ministerial authority to the Word so that he or she can be held accountable.100

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97 Cf. “This is all meant to remind us to that ministry is not a profession. It is a vocation. One could not pay pastors for what is routinely expected of them. One must be called in order do the task. Although pastors may struggle with what it means exactly to be called by God to lead a church, they must have some sense that they are in ministry because God wants them to be.” Willimon, *Pastor*, 14; cf. Eugene Peterson, “On Being Unnecessary,” in *The Unnecessary Pastor*, 2-4, 18.


99 See Den Dulk, “De verzoeking Christus te representeren,” 122-129. The basic assumption behind Den Dulk’s rejection of Christological representation as a ‘temptation’, is his problematic identification with the exclusive activity of the Spirit. Though I appreciate his call not to tie the Spirit to the ministerial office, I do not share is conclusion that Christological representation is therefore to be avoided.

In addition to the Christological sending that lies behind a minister’s authority, Browne also recognized the communal recognition thereof, termed ‘reception’. Reception thus denotes a dependence on congregational consent or ‘outward vocation’ (§ 3.3.3.). This appreciation for people’s consent in the context of appointing local ministry was—as we observed in Chapter 2—already present in the Presbyterian movement (§ 2.3.4.- § 2.3.6.). In fact, people’s involvement in the appointment of official ministry is rather an ‘old practice’ of which traces can already be detected in the first centuries AD.101 For this reason, we should be careful not to associate the idea of congregational consent too quickly with modern ideas of democratic election. Congregational consent, in the way Browne uses it, is not the same as ‘letting everyone have his or her say,’ or Hauerwas’s biggest fear, the ‘tyranny of individual wills’ (§ 4.3.1.).102 Congregational consent is about finding common commitment and shared conviction. As Victor Lee Austin writes in his book on authority, “consent is what happens when we think together.”103 Browne’s concept of reception as a communal recognition of God’s covenantal provision is therefore perfectly congruent with the practice of ‘communal discernment’ used as an argument against ordained ministry by James McClendon (§ 1.6.1.).

Besides bringing the communal participation to expression, the wording ‘reception’ also signifies that a congregation never controls the ministry, but ‘receives’ them as a covenantal gift—along the lines of Christ’s distribution in Ephesians 4:7-11—to sustain their covenantal life under Christ’s authority. This is similar to Hauerwas’s idea of story-formed authority. He rightly explains that authority should not be viewed as a solution to our deficiency of communal life, but rather as something that proceeds from the common life to facilitate that very way of life (§ 4.3.1). Congregational ecclesiology would do well, therefore, to regain this sense of authority as constitutive for community building. Hence, communal discernment does not necessarily stand over against ministerial authority, but is a fair manifestation of people’s willingness to have authority. This means, as Hauerwas also points out, that ministerial authority essentially draws upon the communal consent to have Christ as their ultimate authority. In the same way, Browne’s covenantal ecclesiology anticipated a community which understands itself as the recipient of Christ’s gift of ordained ministry, authorized to seek people who displayed the characteristics associated with this Christological office: people whose lives witness sufficient learning and a godly life (§ 3.3.2). The submission to ministerial

102 Cf. “Ironically, the most coercive aspect of the liberal account of the world is that we are free to make up our own story.” Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame: The University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 84.
103 Victor Lee Austin, *Up with Authority: Why We Need Authority to Flourish As Human Beings* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 10.
authority asked of the gathered community (as described in Browne’s autobiography), equally should be viewed as an expression of communal consent (§ 3.5.4.). It can be concluded, therefore, that Browne’s covenantal approach meets the objections of Spurgeon, who feared that the recognition of an ordained order of ministry would sidetrack the involvement of the local church and would relieve ministers from the necessity of living exemplary lives (§ 1.6.2.). For without consent, there is only tyranny or control based on dominance, oppression and possibly violence. And constraint should have no place in Christ’s covenant. ‘Reception by consent’ is thus not to anchor an idea of democracy or voluntarism, but is a consequence and an expression of Christ’s authority whose ‘kingdom is not ruled by force’ but by way of a covenant (§ 3.2.3.). Like Paul, Browne noticed the parallel structures of authority between church and civil rules, but at the same time recognized the transforming consequences of Christ’s Lordship, ensuring the differences of how authority was to be exercised (§ 3.4.4.).

Sending and reception, accordingly, are evidently grafted upon a covenantal idea of ministerial accountability. This is also Browne’s major point in his apology A Reformation without tarrying, in which he hold Puritan ministers accountable for their refusal to act upon their covenant-based authority (§ 3.2). For Browne, ministerial authority is a vehicle to help the covenanted community to live under Christ’s authority, an instrument in the ‘setting/living apart’ of the whole church. A minister’s life should therefore be a visible testimony of the supreme authority of Christ. Browne’s reference to Ephesians 1:22 to explain a local church’s priority over a bishop is characteristic in this regard: ‘first they have their authority together’ (§ 3.5.1.). Inasmuch Christ is the only ‘head of the church’, ecclesial authority can only exist when it is lived out in faithful communion with Christ through the participation in his covenanted community. This becomes even more clear in Browne’s correspondence with Thomas Cartwright, in which he insists on the calling of every congregation to ‘let alone’ those ministers whose ‘dumb ministry’ did not agree with Christ’s charge (§ 3.6.3.). For ministerial authority without ministerial accountability is unable to represent Christ’s singular authority.

104 “To be sure, failure to be held accountable is one definition of corruption, and a world where there is any justice, corruption will lead to a person’s removal from leadership.” James Davison Hunter, To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 256.
2. Another aspect found in Browne’s proposal regarding ministerial authority is that he distances himself from the violent and oppressive ways in which the episcopal and civil authority was maintained in Elizabethan England. This is a rather vital aspect since it will help us to more clearly disentangle the notion of ministerial authority from other associations with coercive authoritarianism that typified the Christendom era. Returning in Browne’s literature is the Biblical image of the prophet to model his concept of ministerial authority. A prophet is a vivid example of the kind of authority which is exercised ‘not by force’ but by vulnerable witness. Not only in his Biblical references, but also more conceptually in his catechetical *A Booke which Sheweth* (§ 3.4.), Browne poses the reception of ordained ministers as a public manifestation of the church ‘sharing’ in Christ’s prophethood. Hence, an ordained minister does not mediate Christ’s covenanting presence (§ 5.2.2.), nor the Spirit’s activity, but a right understanding of Christ’s prophetic teaching found in Scripture (§ 3.4.2.). It is interesting that precisely this prophetic approach to ministerial office returns in the post-Christendom ideas of Hauerwas and Vanhoozer, matching the missional nature of the church. Especially in today’s society ordained ministry needs to make itself *minus*, a ‘holy fool’ to use Vanhoozer’s wording, to better represent Christ’s ultimate authority. 105 Through clothing the ministerial office again in the prophets cloak, reasserts our statement that it is a minister’s faithful message that ‘conveys’ Christ’s authority and not a minister’s personal authority or academic credentials. Much like Spurgeon who sometimes ridiculed university-trained clergy for their incompentency to explain the gospel (§ 1.6.2.), Browne’s caution with the academia, as established in Chapter 3 (§ 3.3.1.), is not derived from a general antipathy toward university education, but flows from his concern with the necessity of practical divinity. An element which returns significantly in Hauerwas and Vanhoozer’s proposals as they both stress the importance of practical wisdom or sapiential theology. The call for wisdom takes the ministry out of the sphere of intellectual elitism or ‘specialist advice’ and brings it into the realm of discipleship by showing meaningful understanding of Scripture. Useful are the notions of ‘the task of interpretation’ and ‘dramaturgical improvisation’ which we found with Hauerwas and Vanhoozer in this regard, as they reveal the need for local practice and communal participation. A minister’s prophetic ministry is only constructively played out when the community takes heed.

At the same time, Scriptural interpretation has also become a new form of ‘violence’ and a source of controversy, which is most vividly present in the disagreement over the concept of *autopistia*. The tension between canonical and communal authority will be discussed below. Note, that Browne did not understand ministerial authority in the capacity of ‘ruling power’ or decision-making, which he—as we observed—placed in

105 Cf. Hunter, who comments that ‘status’ and elitist structures of leadership are in conflict with the gospel. See his *To Change the World*, 258.
the hands of the local eldership (§ 3.4.2.). Just like Hauerwas, minsters ‘lead’ not by imposing rules and decisions, but by helping the church to define themselves and find direction by explanation of Scripture. Ministerial authority is thus an instrument in the community’s authoritative witness to the world. The church is to become a ‘spectacle of the gospel’ as Vanhoozer rephrases Lesslie Newbigin’s idea of the church as ‘visible hermeneutic of the gospel’. For, as Browne emphasized, the whole church participates in Christ’s office of Priest, Prophet and King, and the ordained ministry is according to Browne only a visible expression of this communal sharing in Christ’s prophethood. Furthermore, church discipline, often referred to as ‘the power of the keys’ (Matt. 16:19; cf. 18:18) is not possessed by the ordained ministry, nor only the eldership, but by the joint congregation (§ 3.6.1.). Though they certainly have a responsibility in the establishment of discipline, its exercise seems to be predominantly a communal affair.

It is my conviction that Browne’s idea of sending and reception offers us a balanced account in which ministerial authority is valued as derivative of Christological representation and at the same time firmly embedded within a local community. This was also his primary concern with the episcopacy, since the bishop’s office lacked a covenantal framework it was therefore not substantially different from tyranny. Consequently ministerial authority, in Browne’s view, is not something which denotes independence from a local community (as with the English bishops and their courts), but rather his role as covenantal agent within the covenanted church. Ministerial authority is thus not a possession of some, but a vocation to all: a role to be taken up within the covenanted church. This also fits the Ephesian paradigm, in which ministerial authority is associated with the ‘building up’ of the church (Eph. 4:12). To be called to the ministry, is to be authorized by Christ, and to act for the benefit of the whole church.

5.3.3. Christological Representation and the Unity of the Church
Our reading of Ephesians 4 confronts us furthermore with the question about the relationship between ecclesial unity and the Christological representation by the ordained ministry. This has proven to be a delicate subject. Especially McClendon and Volf attach ecclesial unity directly to their egalitarian understanding of congregational ecclesiology (§ 1.6.1. and § 1.6.3.). They conceive a distinct Christological representation, attributed solely to the ordained ministry, as a direct undermining of the church as ‘a company of equals’. While our study of Browne’s literature did not specifically discuss this issue, it has become clear that Browne uses his theological category of ‘covenant’ to describe the bond between Christ and his church, including also the ordained ministry. I think ‘covenant’ would indeed be a more helpful term since it not only provides more theological substance to the kind of unity the church is to be, but also prevents us from ascribing the ministry with a certain Christological ontology independently from the rest
of the congregation. Browne shared the same Reformed reluctance to make strong connections between ministerial office and the person of the minister, as we observed earlier with Bucer and Calvin (§ 2.3.1. and § 2.3.2.). The real unity of the church is the ‘one Lord’ (Eph. 4:5). This, however, does not mean that Browne denied ordained ministers to have any role with regard to the unity of the church. Though Browne firmly rejected the unifying presence of the singular bishop—since the English bishops stood ‘outside’ the covenental bond of a local church—his own argument was entirely aimed at the formative role of ministers to maintain and sustain the covenental unity through the faithful conveyance of Christ’s message. From this perspective, Browne’s concept of Christological representation as a functional instrument of this covenental unity within Christ’s rule, would be a fruitful contribution. Moreover, this emphasis on the unifying function of the minister as ‘messenger’ corresponds to the idea we found in Ephesians where ecclesial unity is connected to certain authoritative teaching regarding Christ (Eph. 4:13-16). To Browne, as within the wider Reformation, ministerial authority is always dependent on the minister as ‘servant of the Word’.

1. Where in Browne’s day the hierarchic concept of ministerial authority was subject of controversy, today controversy have expanded to institutionalized authorities in general. Authority, as such, is sometimes even regarded as an obstacle for true community formation. Our readings in Browne—and especially in Stanley Hauerwas—have been worthwhile. Specifically Hauerwas showed how community and authority are not necessarily conflicting magnitudes, but can be mutually supportive. He convincingly argues that for a community to function as a unity, authority is a necessary condition as it enables a group of individuals to find, or be reminded of, a shared story (§ 4.3.).

106 See for example in Van de Beek, Lichaam en Geest, 205-209. I detect a certain ambivalence in Van de Beek’s thinking as he simultaneously tries to ascribe the ministry with Christological representation that continues Christ’s earthly presence as incarnated Son, yet also embraces Calvin’s functional interpretation admitting that officers are normal people like any other.

107 Cf. Van der Borght, Theology of Ministry, 420.


109 See also Austin, Up with Authority, 1-2, 15-26. He notably states that authority must not be seen as a product of the Fall, but as an inherently part of the good creation and is positively related to freedom: as our freedom increases, the more authority is required. He mentions the example of an orchestra which allows for a greater variety of musical pieces to be played than by an individual musician, but that it always requires a conductor to allow a random gathering of musicians to play as a symphony orchestra.
authority. Hauerwas’s story-formed authority benefits our present aim of retrieving Browne’s covenantal idea of sending and reception in contemporary ecclesiology. Ministerial authority should not be conceived of as an independent position outside the community (‘an over and against’), but rather an embodied and embedded means by which God affirms the communal identity as his covenanted community. Thus, ministerial authority rests upon the covenantal relations between Christ and his church, and not upon the singular person.

It is significant that Hauerwas in his later career includes Christological representation more vigorously in his thinking. Particularly in the ordination sermon—earlier mentioned—Hauerwas most explicitly mentions the Christological representation as a unifying ‘activity’, namely to do for the church what only the whole church can do (§ 4.4.1.). In what follows, Hauerwas shows the importance of Christological representation as a means of communal participation through the ecclesial actions of Word and sacrament. In much the same way, though without the sacramental terminology, Vanhoozer too notes the Christological representation of the ordained ministry explicitly in the actions of Word and sacrament, as the basic acts of ‘cultivating’ the life of Christ amidst the congregation (§ 4.2.2.). In my opinion, congregational ecclesiology would do well to account for the unifying significance of ordained minister in the ministerial acts. The minister is thus not a representation of Christ, but rather his representative. This means that an ordained ministry never vicariously embodies the unity of the church, yet through Word and sacrament shows and generates the ‘unity of the Spirit’, so that the ‘unity of faith’ might be attained and the church grows ‘into Christ’ (Eph. 4:3, 13). Even Volf, who denies every idea of Christological representation, admits that since ordained ministry is a more stable form of ministry, it potentially provides continuity and unity (§ 1.6.3.). The problem is that without Christological representation, ministerial office as a unifying instrument becomes inarticulate. For it is the recognition of Christological representation that locates and confines the ordained ministry within the covenantal relation between Christ and his church. It denotes first of all that not the minister but Christ is the real and ultimate authority. But, secondly, that ministerial authority can only be intelligible from the communal recognition of Christ’s ultimate authority, exercised and represented by minister in his role as minister verbi divini. Hence, a minister unifies the community when acting authoritatively on the basis of the communal allegiance to Christ. Francesca Montemaggi, in her contribution to Religion in Consumer Society (2013), offers a practical example of the possibility of communal authority in her analysis of the religious life of a Welsh Evangelical church. Not denying the powerful factors of ‘self-interest’ and ‘personal preference’, she also concludes that “choice is fundamental to the pursuit of a committed religious life. Indeed it is from

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110 Cf. “To be an authority is to be authorized by someone or something beyond oneself.” Austin, Up with Authority, 19.
choice that commitment arises. Such commitment imposes an element of heteronomy, of an external authority (God) as sovereign over one’s life.” Her research thus shows that, while consumerism and marketization have their bearing on church life and authority, it does not preclude authentic commitment as sometimes assumed. Rather, commitment flows from an authentic discovery of the meaning and purpose of life related to the degree in which churches are able to manifest ‘a heteronomous authority’. For this reason, congregational ecclesiology should more firmly locate ministerial authority within the church’s recognition of the heteronomous authority of Christ’s covenantal presence. Paul Fiddes similarly, in light of contemporary postmodernity, writes: “That is, our final authority is a person. It is not a book, nor a creed, nor even a basis of faith, but a person in which God expresses God’s self fully.” This means that every concept of ministerial authority can never be ‘carved in stone’, nor could Christological representation ever be explained or exercised as a ‘Christological substitution’. It should always be subject to Christ and the purpose of spiritual growth and maturation of the community as is witnessed by Ephesians 4:12. Browne’s covenantal understanding Christological representation in terms of ‘sending and reception’ proves therefore to be a stimulating theological framework to contemporary congregational ecclesiology as it fully acknowledges the supreme authority of Jesus Christ and a minister’s dependence on the community.

2. It is true, nonetheless, that Browne’s understanding of ecclesial unity is primarily vertically oriented toward the communal life of obedience to God. This means that a more horizontal perspective is somewhat lacking, as commonly captured by the terminology of the ‘universal church’, which we also encountered in Ephesians. This can be partly explained by the fact that Browne’s ecclesiology is primarily an attempt to correct the hierarchic ecclesiology of the Church of England. Like his Presbyterian contemporaries (§ 2.4.), he stressed the local embeddedness of ordained ministry in order to call attention to its subservient role with regard to community. But, this is not the whole story. For, as we also found, Browne did recognize the covenantal consequences of ‘many churches together’ seeking mutual betterment (§ 3.5.). While maybe poorly developed, it does point to the possibility of a wider application of ‘church’ and ‘covenantal unity’ that extends well beyond the local community. The recognition of this broader application of covenantal unity does not directly place one outside the tradition of congregational ecclesiology, as sometimes assumed. Congregational ecclesiology would do well to incorporate a greater appreciation of this more horizontal sensus unitatis, for which Browne’s covenantal theology offers a theological vocabulary proper to the Free Church tradition. It may provide a basis for the wider implications of

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112 Fiddes, Tracks and Traces, 50.
ordained ministry than only the local church. By consequence, as Hauerwas notes, ordained ministers can be instrumental in ecclesial unity as they represent local covenanted communities to the broader covenant church—for example, the denomination, association, union, or even ecumenical encounters—and the broader covenanted church to the local.

My conclusion is therefore that congregational ecclesiology, certainly within our post-Christendom setting, needs to develop a stronger consciousness of the importance of Christological representation as an aspect and instrument of covenantal unity. The Christological representation of the ordained ministry ‘happens’ in the authoritative role of finding direction on the basis of the received unity in Christ. Overall, a minister is an instrument in the growth to further ecclesial unity, both vertically as well as horizontally.

5.3.4. Prophetic Authority: Canonical, Communal, and Catholic
Against an episcopalian authoritarianism, associated with royal power and privileges, Browne modelled the ordained minister after the example of a Biblical prophet. Whereas the rule of singular bishops (viz. ‘the lordship of bishops’) rivalled the Lordship of Christ (§ 3.3.2.), the figure of the prophet much better expressed his idea of a covenantal agent as acting upon the authority of Christ. Browne, like many others in the Reformed tradition, clothes his idea of ministerial authority in the prophethood in order to differentiate the role of the ordained ministry from the sacerdotal priest. This was literally the case in Cambridge where Presbyterians exchanged the priestly vestments for the academic gown (§ 2.3.3.). It is captivating to observe how in particular the prophetic typology of ordained ministry returns in the contemporary proposals of both Hauerwas and Vanhoozer as way to create space for a kind of ‘powerless authority’ in the context of today’s aversion of institutionalized authority. Though, admittedly the prophethood is an institution of its own, it is an institution that does not coincide with the civil structures of power and therefore allows for a better way to describe ministerial authority in terms of vulnerability and accountability.

1. Browne’s prophetic model of ministerial authority fits our purpose of a communal form of authority. First because, as Hauerwas shows, prophets speaks with authority in view of the shared calling of the church to be a place of witness to the world (§ 4.3.1.). He rightly rephrases the question for the necessity of authority in the church to the question for the kind of authority that is presupposed by the priestly mission of the church. Hauerwas enables us to overcome the sentimentality and pragmatism of our time and reconnects more firmly with the history of Israel and the church, for prophetic authority is a ‘ministry of witness’ resting upon the actual authority of its Sender in the service of the community’s authoritative witness.113 In other words, describing the

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113 See also the theological account by Old Testament scholar R.W.L. Moberly, Prophecy and Discernment (CSCD, vol. 14; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), esp. 1-13. Moberly refers to Moses as the model ‘prophet’
character of ministerial authority in terms of prophetic authority is fully consistent with missio Dei as our determinative factor (see above § 5.2.3.). Prophets receive their purpose from the missionary calling of the whole community. For the same reason, I am cautious to adopt Hauerwas’s more recent appropriation of the priestly garment to denote the ordained ministry (§ 4.4.1.). In acknowledgement of Browne’s argument, priestly language easily, and too quickly, ties ministerial authority to a minister’s person and thus carries the suggestion of a superior spiritual elite. Not denying its value of Christological representation, as I already noted above, the prophethood—certainly for our present day context—provides a clearer image of a vulnerable authority that has no bearing on its own but depends upon its place within the covenantal relation of Christ and his church.

Second, because the model of the prophet allows us to picture a theology of ordained ministry that does not depend on control to exercise its vocation. Prophetic authority is exactly the kind of servant authority that, in McClendon’s wording, ‘says No to social control’ (§ 1.6.1.). If ministers indeed represent and reflect Christ’s authority, Browne argues, they should not need the instruments of earthly kings and rulers to keep discipline (§ 3.2.3.). Prophets act with vulnerable bravery when calling the community to obedience to God. This, of course, resonates strongly with the pacifist theology of Hauerwas, but the same argument is also made by Vanhoozer: the post-Christendom situation revives the opportunity for the church to learn to ground its existence in God’s mission, and that the world is not in our control. Prophetic authority is a form of authority that does not require control but trust in order to be authoritative. Like Israel’s prophets where, to speak with Calvin’s words, ‘like ’puny men raised from the dust’ (§ 2.3.2), ministers are raised by God to be his counter-cultural instrument among the people. Similarly, Vanhoozer’s adherence to the Shakespearean character of ‘the fool’ resembles the prophet, lacking political power yet speaking out against the powers that be (§ 4.3.2.). A minister is thus not a ‘holy fool’ for her or his lack of sophistication or academic training, as Spurgeon at times suggests (§ 1.6.2.), but precisely because prophets lack the prevalence of power to enforce authority. They, by contrast, need to

who speaks for God with the purpose of letting his people know how to live within God’s covenant: "The purpose of this is that Moses can then transmit what he has heard to Israel, with a view to Israel thus knowing what God wants of them so that they can live accordingly. Here we have, spelled out with clarity and precision, the prime sense of what it is to be a particular kind of mediator—not a priest (though a priest may speak for God, Mal. 2:4-7), but one whose prime responsibility is to speak for God, a prophet (nāvi’).” (7).

114 See Robert Louis Wilken, Remembering the Christian Past (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995), 172-173. Wilken would have us remember that the word from which we derive ‘authority’ (auctoritas) is rooted in auctor, meaning ‘someone who is worthy of trust’: “Authority resides in a person who by actions as well as words invites trust and confidence.”

show authority by a pronounced accountability to a higher authority as Hauerwas shows (§ 4.3.1.). They do not seek refuge in a compelling personality, characteristic of charismatic leadership, but by reasonable witness that sustains their representation of Christ. This is not to deny that charismatic leadership can sometimes accompany the ordained ministry, but that ministers should be cautious to base their authority on an overwhelming personality, rather than the communal allegiance to Christ’s authority. Charismatic leadership is, moreover, often associated with control and infallibility. Interestingly, fragments of this dependence on the personality of the preacher particularly emerge in Spurgeon’s own ministry and in his selection of suitable preachers. Prophetic correction, on the contrary, does not impose itself, but proves itself in the act of interpretation and explanation: showing how the words of Scripture display the authoritative direction of God today. Henceforth, ministers become authoritative insofar their message adequately conveys Christ’s rule as expressed by Scripture—as Robert Browne reminds us. For this reason he criticized both the prestige-orientated ministers (§ 3.3.) as well as the ‘dumb ministers’ (§ 3.6.), since the performance of the latter lacked the means of authentic witness to Christ as Lord; either seeking attention for their own logical and rhetorical capabilities, or relinquishing to preach at all. Though he certainly recognized the performative aspects of authority, I consider Spurgeon’s focus to be too much dependent on a preacher’s personal ‘success’ in winning over converts (§ 1.6.2.). Certainly in our contemporary celebrity culture, ordained ministers need to actively prevent idealizing of their own personality, and seek voluntary trust instead, by intelligible speech as vulnerable people. Vulnerability exemplifies the life of people who have come to know their limitations, contingencies and

116 See for example Johan van Holten, Rol en roeping: Een praktisch-theologisch onderzoek naar de rolopvatting van aanstaande, beginnende en oudere predikanten gerealiseerd aan hun roepingsbesef (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2009), esp. 227, 247-251. In his practical-theological study among Reformed ministers in the Netherlands, the option of ‘charismatic leadership’ is by some respondent suggested as a possible solution to the contemporary crises of church and ministry, which he in the ends adopts to accommodate the current neediness and demand for inspiring leaders. For a more problematized picture of charismatic leadership, see Rein Nauta, Paradoxaal leiderschap: Schetsen voor een psychologie van de pastor (Nijmegen: Valkhof Pers, 2006), esp. 30-34. That is not to say that prophetic authority rules out a charismatic side, but that I only aim to stress that it may not be dependent upon charisma: ordained ministers may be charismatic, but they are never ordained because they have a charismatic personality. This trend of celebrity/innovation-authority is also observed by Philip Rieff, Charisma: The Gift of Grace, and How It Has Been Taken Away From Us (New York: Pantheon Books, 2007), esp. 3-4.

117 Spurgeon, for example, rejected candidates for his Pastors’ College for lacking the outward characteristics he considered indicant of a divine calling, such as an adequate voice, the right chest size, a well-kept set of teeth, and the absence of facial abnormalities. See Charles Haddon Spurgeon’s Autobiography, vol. 3: 1856-1878 (Chicago/New York/Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1899), 144-145.

118 The importance of vulnerability (cf. 2 Cor. 4:7) for ministry and mission also appears in two recent dissertations: the homiletical study of Marinus Beute (see his Wie ben ik als ik preik? Bronnen en herbronning van het homiletisch zelfbeeld [Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum Academic, 2016], 171) and the missiological study of Eleonora Dorothea Hof (see her Reimagining Mission in the Postcolonial Condition: A Theology of Vulnerability and Vocation at the Margins [Mission, no. 57; Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum Academic, 2016], esp. 167-221).
fallibilities in light of God’s ultimate authority. Only then can ministers serve the participation of the congregation as they enable the congregation to find common consent. Prophetic authority therefore never ‘goes without saying’ but always needs the performative action of ‘speech’. This performative aspect of authority is especially manifest in Kevin Vanhoozer’s metaphor of ‘dramaturgical direction’ (§ 4.2.2.). It aptly encapsulates an accountable form of authority, since a dramaturge’s aim is not to draw people to her or his personality, but to a more adequate display of the Script’s play. Similarly, a minister’s authority stands or falls with the degree in which he or she is able to provide meaningful and truthful speech, so that the church grows in understanding of their role in the covenantal mission of God (Eph. 4:12-13). Consequently, without the doing—meaning a referential life to the authority of Christ—there is no ministerial authority. Seeing that authority is actualized in the performance, I believe that Volf’s combination of ministerial office and leadership still depends too much on a static assumption of authority based on the gift of leadership (§ 1.6.3.). Conclusively, it can be stated that especially in our culture and context, where charismatic leadership is on the rise, as Gerben Heitink observed (§ 1.4.), it becomes all the more important to embed and confine the authority of a minister within a theological framework that articulates and clarifies an ordained minister’s particular role.

2. Dressing ministerial authority with the robe of the prophets—as the one who speaks authoritatively on the basis of the communal sources (Scripture, tradition)—brings us to question of interpretation. For who decides what is ‘authoritative’ interpretation? In Browne’s day controversy focused not so much on the authority of Scripture itself, but on the question if there was space for the civil authority, especially the ‘Christian prince’, to decide in ‘indifferent matters’ (adiaphora, § 2.3.3.). In addition, there was debate about whether the incapability of ordained ministers to adequately read and preach Scripture rendered their ministry in valid (§ 3.3. and § 3.6.). Today the authority of Scripture itself has become controversial. The postmodern turn showed that Scripture’s authority is to a considerable degree actualized in the eye of the beholder. On this point we observed a significant conflict between Hauerwas’s conviction that the Scripture receives its authentication by the church, and therefore cannot be explained individually but requires community, and Vanhoozer’s concern with the reformed theologoumenon of the self-authentication (autopistia) of Scripture. Though I think a

119 Barry Harvey likewise speaks of the “art of vulnerability,” see his Can These Bones Live: A Catholic Baptist Engagement with Ecclesiology, Hermeneutics, and Social Theory (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008), 251-258.
120 Cf. Moberly, Prophecy and Discernment, 4.
121 See Austin, Up with Authority, 37-38, 98-99.
122 See Gerben Heitink, Biografie van de dominee (Baarn: Ten Have, 2001), 267.
123 See D. Christopher Spinks, The Bible and the Crisis of Meaning: Debates on the Theological Interpretation of Scripture (London: T&T Clark, 2007), esp. 3-40. Spinks investigates the rise of a theological interpretation of Scripture amidst the contemporary challenges of modernity (viz. objectification of the Biblical text) and postmodernity (viz. the relativity of the Biblical text).
tension will continue to exist between both viewpoints, an adequate description of a minister’s prophetic authority in actual practice requires both perspectives.

First of all, Hauerwas’s adoption of George Lindbeck’s ‘cultural linguistic turn’ reminds today’s “choice society” of the role and significance of Scripture within its own social setting: the community of the church. The importance of Scripture is not up for debate, but rather, the church qualifies itself by receiving the Bible as Scripture. Not only since Scripture and Christian belief are itself products of tradition (‘sending and receiving’), but also because it is through the reception of Scripture as determinative story, the church also confesses its indebtedness to the people of Israel and the continuity of God’s redemptive mission. Scripture itself is a gift to help the church locate itself within God’s redemptive mission to the world, to be equipped in order to join God’s mission. For this reason, the prophetic authority of the ministry is directed at the priesthood of the church. It is an aspect which also appears prominently in Vanhoozer’s literature (‘playerhood of all believers’, § 4.3.2.). Hauerwas’s communal orientation explicitly takes into account that Scripture’s authority is only expressed in the church’s authoritative witness. Without the community’s embodied obedience, the Bible is a ‘dead book’. Cambridge Puritans, among whom also Browne, likewise stressed the importance of practical sermons which functioned as the *viva voce* of God. The whole opposition to the mere reading of Scripture and homilies came precisely from a deep consciousness that the authority of Scripture needed to be contextually applied. For this reason ordained ministers were entrusted with the task of bridging the gap between ‘text and context’. In the same way, Hauerwas entrusts the ministry with the ‘task of interpretation’ in view of the prophetic witness of the entire church (§ 4.2.1.). Ministers remind the church in an accountable fashion what it means to live accountable lives themselves: to receive the Bible as Scripture as part of the catholic community of saints that transcends time and place, yet always takes shape in the local covenanted congregation. Hauerwas’s perspective calls us to the importance of the communal (‘cultural’) embeddedness of Scripture. An important aspect which should be mentioned here, but is not so strongly

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126 Cf. “The *autopistia* functions within a covenant relationship.” Henk van den Belt, *The Authority of Scripture in Reformed Theology: Truth and Trust* (SRT, vol. 17; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 314. Van den Belt offers an elaborate explanation of *autopistia* in relation to the church, in which he aims to hold together both statements, namely the inseparability of Scripture and communion of the church (‘as a Mother that teaches her children to trust Scripture’), and the independency of Scripture as the only foundation of faith (contra Van de Beek, *Lichaam en Geest van Christus*, 184-191), see Van den Belt, *The Authority of Scripture in Reformed Theology*, 325-327. Though I am favorable to his proposal, I would not speak of the independency of Scripture *an sich*, but of the Spirit’s sovereign testimony through Scripture, which I think is also more agreeable with his later conclusion that the *autopistia* belongs to pneumatology.
reflected in Hauerwas’s literature, is the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti*. It resembles Vanhoozer’s description of the Holy Spirit as the director of the church’s performance (§ 4.2.2.). Recognizing the communal embeddedness of Scripture’s authority is primarily recognizing the witnessing role of the Spirit within de *communio sanctorum*. Browne likewise states the inward testimony of the Spirit as the prime mover of obedience to Christ (§ 3.4.1.). Ultimately, ordained ministers are servants of the inner testimony of the Spirit as the real and internal teacher (*magister internus*) of the church (cf. 1 Joh. 2:27). All the more reason to affirm the importance of communal Bible reading, since an adequate interpretation requires a ‘plurality of voices’, to use Vanhoozer’s loose reference to Ephesians 3:18 (§ 4.3.2.). This is finally also how we must understand Hauerwas’s adoption of the ‘cultural linguistic turn’, namely as a protest against an over-individualistic Bible reading that allows every person to have his own interpretation, unaccountable to the community of the church and its designated ministry. For, in the end, Hauerwas himself is a most vivid example of someone who exhibits ‘prophetic authority’ to speak against the church in the West and ‘save people from the tyranny of their own individual wills.’

Second, Vanhoozer points out that in order to recognize the possibility of ‘prophetic correction’—meaning a kind of speech that is contrary to the *communis opinio*—that Scripture’s authority may never dissolve in the community’s contextual application. While the meaning (illocution) of Scripture is stable, congregations may err in their reading and performance. If ministers are to speak on behalf of Christ, as we have said, then it follows that Scripture must carry authority which also transcends local practices. Again, we should note the work of the Spirit on this point. Though the Spirit’s testimony operates within the community, the Spirit is not bound to the community, but is free to raise up God’s prophets from among the worshippers Vanhoozer, with his emphasis on the self-convincing nature of the canon (*autopistia*), recovers thereby the Protestant conviction that also empowered Browne to confront the royal supremacy and its subjugated bishops as an unbiblical practice that conflicted with the rule of Christ (§ 3.2.). Similarly, Vanhoozer admonishes that human authorities may never replace the authority of Christ within the community (§ 4.3.2.), but since there is ‘Someone’ prior to Scripture and human interpretation, the church and its ministry can be accountable for their interpretation. His characterization of Scripture as ‘covenant of discourse’ is an explicit confession about the nature of this book being a vehicle of Christ’s covenantal presence: an exposition and invitation to participate in his redemptive mission (‘Theodrama’). It is a clear pronouncement of the church as an obedient act itself. In many ways,

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also Hauerwas admits that the church’s mandate to be church is not ‘from this world’ but found in the otherworldly story of Jesus presented in Scripture (§ 4.2.1.). He, for example, emphasizes that not every opinion counts equally but that people need to submit themselves to the practices and tradition of the church (§ 4.3.1.). Moreover, as we said, is Hauerwas himself ‘not also amongst the prophets’? I conclude, therefore, that because God is speaking in Scripture, ordained ministry is not merely about ‘specialist advice’, but about actual prophecy. Only because Scripture has a voice of its own, a prophet can be raised to speak authoritatively against the practices of a local church. Therefore I agree with Vanhoozer that magisterial authority, at least for so far it exists in this world, can only belong to the Canonical Scriptures. He is right in correcting Hauerwas that it is not up to the community to ‘rule’ Scripture, but—as Scripture testifies of the rule of Christ—be ruled by it. The church as a covenantal gathering under Christ’s authority is essentially a gathering to hear ultimately God’s Word through the preacher’s interpretation of Scripture. And when a minister preaches, he or she calls upon the community to recognize God’s voice and not her or his personal opinions (cf. Ps. 95:7; Heb. 3:7). For precisely this reason, a prophetic ministry needs to be firmly canonically rooted as well as communally embedded. 130

Thus far, we have concluded that prophetic authority occurs within the bipolarity of communion and canon. But we have also said that the affirmation of autopistia may never be isolated from the community—both historically and theologically. Not in the least since autopistia itself, as theological conviction, is an example of a communal reading of Scripture. 131 Therefore, it is necessary to add catholicity as a ‘third mark’ to prophetic authority, as is also directed by Hauerwas and Vanhoozer. Meaning, that a minister’s explanation of Scripture should resonate with the explanation of the community of faith over the centuries. In short, ministerial authority also requires a catholic embeddedness, as the ordained minister, in person, is an ‘expression and means of catholicity’ (§ 5.2.4.). Certainly in today’s postmodern context, ordained ministers serve especially by helping their particular congregation to rise above the individual readings of Scripture, and connecting them with the broader church and the people of Israel. This is done, for example, by incorporating creedal and confessional theology as Vanhoozer mentions, but also by integrating exegetical theology with everyday testimonies of the saints of yesterday and tomorrow. Likewise, ordained ministers could lead their churches in a rediscovery of the Jewishness of their faith, the role Israel’s heritage, and their existence as a Messianic community. 132

130 Cf. “Thus, there is no authority apart from the assembly, so is there no authority apart from Scripture.” Austin, *Up with Authority*, 99.
131 Cf. “The autopistia of Scripture functions in the context of the church. It may not be interpreted individualistically. Scripture is received together with the community of believers, the church of all ages and places.” Van den Belt, *The Authority of Scripture in Reformed Theology*, 315.
We can conclude that congregational ecclesiology should recover ministerial authority in the sense of prophetic authority, now it has been stripped from the natural and established forms of power associated with Christendom. Rather than self-evident, prophetic authority is only actualized in the act of speaking accountably on the basis of Christ’s authority. Moreover, prophetic authority enables us to formulate a theology of ordained ministry as a provision to the church’s participation in God’s redemptive mission to help bridge both canon and community. In other words, ministerial authority happens in the interplay of canon and community, in view of the ‘church catholic’ being a witnessing community to the world.

5.3.5. Theological Accountability and Authentic Discipleship

Significant in our exploration of Hauerwas and Vanhoozer is their shared regret over the separation between academic theology and the church, which they conceive of as an ill-fitting divorce. Many churches within the congregational tradition, such as Baptists and other Free Churches, have developed an ambivalent relationship with the theological academia. They took rather pride in having lay preachers, often referred to as ‘evangelists’ or ‘Bible-teachers’, who were not infested by the historical criticism and scientific methodology, but were able to explain the gospel in accessible and enthusiastic language. It is a tendency that took a strong hold on the congregational tradition, and cannot be viewed separately from the pragmatic ecclesiology of the last decades, and ‘every member ministry’ (§ 1.4.). This contesting view of the preaching ministry is particularly evident in the criticism of Charles Spurgeon (§ 1.6.2.). Though Spurgeon himself could certainly not be viewed as an anti-intellectual, he frequently expressed his difficulty with the established academia and founded his own school, the Pastors’ College, in 1856. His problem with ordained ministry was also fueled by his experience with academic clergymen, who he more than once identified with the same reference as

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135 See for example the critical account of the ministry within the Church Growth-movement in Tim Suttle, Shrink: Faithful Ministry in a Church-Growth Culture (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), esp. 77-94.

136 Cf. David W. Bebbington, Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody (A History of Evangelicalism, vol. 3; Downers Grove: IVP, 2005), 39. For Spurgeon’s difficulty with the academia, see also David W. Bebbington, “Spurgeon and the Common Man,” Baptist Review of Theology 5, no. 1 (1995): 63-75. It should be noted that Spurgeon himself was also criticized himself for his lack of theological training and sophisticated speech.
Browne did with his unduly contemporaries: ‘dumb dogs that cannot bark’ (Isa. 56:10). As we have found, Browne’s criticism should not be mistaken for a mere rejection of the academia, but rather as call for learned and practical ministry (§ 3.3. and § 3.6.1.). For example, in his correspondence to Thomas Cartwright, he positively appealed to canon law and its requirements of the ministry, prescribing sufficient learning (doctus) and godliness (clericus). Browne primarily contested the parish priests who were incapable of studying the Scriptures adequately and write their own sermons, and relied on premeditated homilies regardless of the situation of their parishes. In the same way he also criticized the self-absorbed attitude of preachers who liked to exhibit their knowledge yet neglected to adequately nourish the people who were entrusted to their pastoral care. Preachers who ‘skillfully’ preached their parishes asleep—as famously visualized in The Sleeping Congregation of William Hogarth (1697-1764). Thus Browne argued for practical divinity in addition to the academic formation, like he experienced himself under the tutorship of Richard Greenham (§ 2.2. and § 3.5.1.). Greenham’s household seminary was not aimed to rival Cambridge University, but to complement its curriculum in order to deliver further educated clergymen, better equipped for the preaching ministry.

Precisely in view of the developments in Western society and the demise of Christendom, we need to retrieve Browne’s complementary view of ministerial formation, in which scholarly learning and practical divinity go together. Surely, in a culture where familiarity with the Christian faith is no longer self-evident, churches are the remaining marginal relics of Christian witness. With as consequence that the urgency of ordained ministers who are well-versed in Scripture and the Christian tradition has only increased. They are to teach the community what it means to be church, what it is to perform the gospel, to show meaningful understanding in a context that no longer provides an outlined pattern for Christian living. Both Hauerwas and Vanhoozer make us aware of this urgency. Hauerwas, for example, exemplifies that the changing relationship between church and Western society demands a ministry that no longer considers itself a ‘notable agent’ of the structures of society (German: Notabeln, Dutch: notabelen) but as an agent of the church’s ministry of witness (§ 4.2.1.). It is an aspect that closely resembles Browne’s returning critique against the mingling of civil and ecclesial offices on the basis of their differences in upholding discipline (§ 3.7.). The ordained minister effectively becomes a residential theologian-hermeneutist, who

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137 Cf. “But, O! there are a great many among us Dissenters, and in the Church of England, too, that are dumb dogs. There are still plenty who do not know any thing about the gospel; who preach a vast deal about a great many things, but nothing about Jesus Christ; who buy their sermons cheap, and preach them at their ease; who ask God to tell them what to say, and then pull their manuscripts out of their pockets.” Charles Spurgeon, “The Dumb Singing,” in Sermons of Rev. C.H. Spurgeon of London, Third Series (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1883), 127. Cf. Jan Martijn Abrahamse, “‘Dumb Dogs That Cannot Bark’: The Puritan Origins of Preaching Revival,” in Baptists and Revival, ed. William Pitts (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2017), fc.
supports the local congregation to live the alternative story of Israel and Jesus in the reality of society. That this requires more than just theological knowledge is amplified by Hauerwas’s terminology of ‘artisanal skills’: it combines theoretical erudition with practical embodiment into one picture (§ 4.3.1.). Consequently, he describes the ordained minister as a ‘master-disciple’ who, like a master craftsman, supports others to be initiated and to be formed in the life of discipleship. Accordingly, the ‘teaching authority’ that accompanies the ordained ministry is no cause for self-indulgence and dominance, but is entirely directed at others to become authoritative witnesses themselves. As the minister is ‘handing on Christ’ through the act of preaching, the minister is also being handed on by Christ. By having a message, they have become messengers of God. The function of a minister extends to his or her being. The task of interpretation should therefore not be viewed as a ministerial privilege, but as an initiative to foster discipleship. For the same reason Hauerwas refuses to limit ordained ministry to a set of ‘professional tasks’ (§ 4.4.1.). Since the church itself exists as a communal discipleship, ordained ministry requires not just academic qualifications but an actual life of discipleship as well which reflects the missional calling of the church. This merging of theological and practical formation becomes even clearer in Vanhoozer’s vocabulary of sapiential theology. It adequately sets forth the emphasis on ‘practical divinity’ found in Browne’s literature and Cambridge Presbyterians (§ 4.3.2.). Ministers are called to help the church to gain practical wisdom from Scripture in order to better perform the gospel in the context of today. The church as ‘gathering of believers’ creates the space to learn what it means to be a disciple of Christ. Precisely therefore the reading of Scripture requires people who precede in the careful and accountable attitude called ‘obedient listening’ characteristic of every disciple. Again it follows that a minister’s teaching authority does not require a categorical difference between clergy and laity, but can be based upon the communal identity as disciples of Christ, among which the ordained ministry receives the role of being the ‘first listener’. The ordained minister is henceforth ‘accountable’ to the degree he or she is able to direct other disciples to hear God’s Word and find wisdom (‘discerning the mind of Christ’) for today. Vanhoozer’s official depictions, such ‘pastor-theologians’ as ‘organic intellectuals’ (§ 4.2.2. and § 4.3.2.), are only to clarify and emphasize the hermeneutic role of the minister in relation to the communal ministry. Helpful is his appropriation of Samuel Wells’ illustrative concept ‘improvisation’ on this point. For improvisation is a very ‘inclusive’ term which

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138 Cf. “So, attention must be paid to the formation of habits of facing Christ in daily prayer, corporate worship and fellowship. These habits might be learnt in the community of a college, or partly in the context of a local church, but be learnt they must.” Paul Goodliff, Ministry, Sacrament and Representation: Ministry and Ordination in Contemporary Baptist Theology, and the Rise of Sacramentalism (CBHHS, vol. 2; Oxford: Regent’s Park College, 2010), 175.

captures what we have said thus far: both the need for sufficient (theological) training to read Scripture and the practical ability to express its significance in diverse circumstances, but also the lack of control over the situation, the opportunity for others to participate, and the likelihood of others watching. Improvisation is a vulnerable form of teaching. Since both the performance itself as well as the outcome are not fixed.

Hauerwas and Vanhoozer consciously process in their ecclesiology that churches have become communal places of practice and rehearsal. Churches are no longer the ‘spiritual enlargement’ of the Christian identity of broader society, but places where people are schooled in the implications of the rule of Christ amidst a context that chooses different stories to live by. If the church, then, is a ‘school of Christ’, his gift of ordained ministry is a provision in adequate and accountable ‘teachers’. Accountability is therefore not so much an additio to balance ministerial authority, but the very essence of the kind of teaching that is at the very heart of the teaching authority of ordained ministry, and is the logical consequence of the church as a community of disciples. Acknowledging the need for theologically skilled ministers does not mean that the ministry is based upon the right academic degrees framed on the wall, but rather flows from the ministerial calling itself: the ability to account for the meaning of Scripture and how it is to shape the community of today. It helps us to retrieve Browne’s call for theological practicality and counter both theological elitism and managerial pragmatism.

5.3.6. Defied by Donatism

A significant problem we encountered in Browne’s literature is his undeniable ‘Donatist’ position with regard to the non-preaching ministers. While we have established that Browne never anticipated a perfectionist church—as did the historic Donatist movement in North Africa—but recognized the inevitable mixed state of the church (§ 3.6.2.). This however, does not in any way negate the fact that Browne considered the ministry and the sacraments of illegitimate ministers—e.i. ministers who were incapable of preaching their own sermons—as invalid. Browne’s ‘Donatist’ position, in the end, concentrates entirely on the personality of the ministry, in which God’s sacramental grace through the Lord’s Supper and baptism are made dependent on the personal holiness of the individual minister. In very much the same way Charles Spurgeon, who ironically

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140 See also Sake Stoppels, Oefenruimte: Gemeente en parochie als gemenschap van leerlingen (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2013), 13: “De kerk is een open ruimte waarin wordt geoefend in de navolging van Christus. De ruimte die de kerk is en biedt, is geen loze ruimte maar een oefenruimte.” [The church is an open space in which practice is made in following Jesus. De space which is the church is and offers, is no empty space but a training facility.]

141 See Ben Quash, “Donatism: Do Christian ministers need to be faultless for their ministrations to be effective,” in Heresies and How to Avoid Them: Why it matters what Christians believe, eds. Ben Quash, and Michael Ward (London/Peabody: SPCK/Hendrickson, 2007), 88. Quash interestingly congratulates the Donatists for representing the more adequate use of Scripture.
once confessed his allegiance to the Donatist movement in a sermon, emphasized holiness as the preeminent requisite for the preaching ministry (§ 1.6.2.). Browne’s ‘Donatism’, however, was motivated by the very same concern for good preaching and practical divinity that originally gave rise to the Puritan movement (see § 2.3.3-§ 2.3.7.). He aimed to correct the sacrosanct character of the priestly ministry who despite their failure to serve their parishes with the Word of God, as well as creeping corruption, remained in their position under the protection of the English bishops and the civil powers. The hesitant attitude among his fellow Puritans, who like Thomas Cartwright in the end refused to deny the legitimacy of unfit ministers, only strengthened him in his convictions (§ 3.6.). In response, Browne rebounded to a view of ordained ministry that made obedience a hallmark of legitimacy. To this day, similar heightened spiritual and moral expectancies toward the ministry within congregational churches, are reflected in many job descriptions in which an emphasis is placed on the exemplary role of the pastor.

In Hauerwas’s perspective the problem is not that there are ethical commitments required from the ordained ministry (§ 4.4.1.). It is rather that moral accountability is often one-sidedly focused on outward behavior and certain ethical shibboleths (viz. sexual conduct, marriage), which neglect to pay attention to the kind of character that corresponds to the role of ordained ministry. It is a point of critique which we also encountered with McClendon (§ 1.6.1.). To avoid Donatism, Hauerwas proposes a return to sacramental theology. A proposal that is not unlike the proponents of the recent ‘sacramental turn’, among whom notably John Colwell (§ 1.4.). Acknowledging the sacramental character of ordained ministry, argues Hauerwas, prevents us from attaching the ministry to certain tasks that can be performed by any other if only morally competent. The sacramental office in which a minister is placed (‘ordered’), is to take the focus away from the personal characteristics of the specific person and further accentuate the notion that this person acts on the authority of Christ on behalf of the congregation. In our aim to retrieve Browne’s theology of ordained ministry for today, I cannot but conclude that there is indeed a quiet Donatist tendency within the congregational tradition. In my opinion Browne and Spurgeon collectively fail to take in account the full implications of their convictions. Yet, on the other hand, I am not convinced that Hauerwas’s appropriation of sacramentalism will entirely solve this issue either, a theme which we will further discuss below. For the problem which Donatism poses, is the presumption of ministerial perfectionism as the determinative factor for the legitimacy

142 “We, known among men in all ages by various names, such as Donatists, Novatians, Paulicians, Petrobrussians, Cathari, Arnoldists, Hussites, Waldenses, Lollards, and Anabaptists have always contended for the purity of the Church, and her distinctness and separation from human government! Our fathers were men accustomed to hardships, and unused to ease.” Charles Spurgeon, “The True Apostolic Succession,” MTP, vol. 7: S. no. 424, Psalm 45:16, delivered 15 December, 1861.

143 See also Henk A. Bakker, “De Vroege Kerk, de goede Herder, en andere herders,” in Van onderen!, 63-77.
of ministerial office and the validity of its practices. A view which, first of all, fails to incorporate the indelible fallibility of creation. To put it differently, Donatism may attack the *character indelebilis* yet it neglects the indelible stain of sinfulness that marks humanity. Disavowing the inescapable fallibility of every ministerial candidate, moreover, creates a new spiritual elite now based on moral superiority instead of ordination. Secondly, if moral stature becomes a condition for ministerial office, ministry essentially becomes dependent on human effort. This is a position which falls short of our understanding of ordained ministry in the covenantal terms of sending and reception. The prevalent argument against sacerdotalism within congregational ecclesiology, as pronounced by Spurgeon, also applies his adoption of Donatism. It suggests a ‘mechanical’ relation between the veracity of ordained ministry and human act. The legitimacy of ordained ministry, in the end, cannot be reduced either to a mere rite nor to a mere deed. For who can ‘dwell on God’s holy hill’ (Ps. 15:1)? And thirdly, Donatism rests upon a very individualistic view of ordained ministry. As Ben Quash rightly says: “It is not just the minister who acts in the sacramental action, but the whole church.” As we’ve said, Christological representation in a covenantal sense is not dependent on an ordained person alone but on her or his role within the covenantal bond. Moral accountability can thus never be isolated from communal discipleship discussed in the previous paragraph. This means, concretely, that ordained ministers also need to show insight in their failures, explicitly leading people in self-reflection upon our common human fallibility. Accountability in today’s culture of social media and consumerism might also require pastors to refuse the (digital) pedestal of success, achievements, and image-building. And instead, more consciously seeking to involve the community in times of questions, challenges, doubts and difficulties, to resist the temptation of becoming an embodiment of spiritual flawlessness and accomplishment. The increasing attentiveness for coaching (‘intervision’) among pastors is a welcome development as it provides a place where shared discipleship might be trained. Vanhoozer, though not directly addressing the issue of Donatism, helpfully highlights the cruciform manner in which ordained ministry is to be performed among the community of saints (§ 4.4.2.). Accordingly, ordained ministers share their life of discipleship (‘dying daily’, 1 Cor. 15:31), which is a life of holiness exemplified in living out of grace and

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144 Cf. Quash, “Donatism,” 88: “The problem was that their practice betrayed two things at the heart of Christian teaching: the ineradicable fallibility of creation (*including* the Church) and its consequent unavoidable need of grace on this side of the end of time.”

145 Quash, “Donatism,” 89.

forgiveness on the basis of Christ’s redemptive work. Ordained ministers are disciples who exercise their distinct office in a ‘cruciform’ manner.\textsuperscript{147}

The test Donatism presents to our study of Browne is not a problem that can be easily solved. Donatism can neither be dismantled by contemporary professionalism, nor by sacerdotal indelibility. Therefore, I hold that we should consider Donatism as a constant reminder that ordained ministry is always exercised \textit{sub cruce} and in accountability to the church. We need to defy Donatism, as a reminder of the particular life that ordained ministry is called to, and to acknowledge that ministry can never controlled by moral achievement.

\section*{5.3.7. Vulnerable Authority}

In this second section we have assessed Browne’s concept of ministerial authority against our set criterion of permanent accountability. Accountability precludes any concept of ordained ministry that refuses the need to be answerable toward the community. Moreover, accountability also denotes a minister’s dependence on God; ministry may never become a power in its own right. In the previous sections we have explained how Browne’s covenantal framing of ordained ministry—in terms of sending and reception—enables us to locate ministerial authority not with the personality of the minister, nor in the exercise of specific tasks, but in the mutual relationships of the local church. Ministerial authority is therefore never a self-evident property, but is reflected in a minister’s prophetic witness to the authority of Christ. Precisely because of this dependent authority, a minister represents Christ toward the ecclesial community. As such, an ordained minister is Christ’s instrument to revitalize the community’s unity in their allegiance to Christ’s rule. It follows that ministerial authority ‘happens’ in the accountable interplay of communion, canon and catholicity, as a minister aims to bring Christ’s message to its practical concern within the local church. Ordained ministers in the congregational tradition are therefore best described in a ‘prophetic fashion’: messengers whose authoritative message is not backed up by institutional dominance or coercive power. However, it can only be exercised by accountable discipleship and theological competency. Hence, ordained ministers are prophets, raised with a vulnerable authority to speak theological understanding in view of the communal growth in Christ: “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (Matt. 10:16). The ordained minister who embodies this vulnerable kind of authority is the Amsterdam pioneering pastor Margrietha Reinders.

\section*{THE STORY OF MARGRIETHA REINDERS}

\textsuperscript{147} See Moberly, \textit{Prophecy and Discernment}, 169- 208, 234. He points us to Paul’s use of ‘cruciformity’ (2 Cor. 4:1-12; 5:11-6:13; and 11:4-12:10) as a discerning criterion of apostolic authenticity.
Since 2009, Margrietha Reinders (1959) has been a church planter in Amsterdam, first in Old West (‘Oud-West’) and currently in Amsterdam East (‘Betondorp’). She grew up in Surinam and Indonesia as the oldest daughter of missionaries. After a difficult return to the Netherlands, living in a foster family, she eventually studied theology in Groningen. After her studies she first became a youth worker in the Nassaukerk in Amsterdam, joined an anti-militaristic movement called Stop de Wapenhandel (‘Stop the Arms Trade’) of which she currently is chairwoman: “This has always been the center for me: the Christian faith has something unique and radical that can change the world—through love. From the beginning it was clear to me that violence and suppression never can be part of God’s agenda for this world, never. Never.”

It was Thomas à Kempis’s book, The Imitation of Christ, that led her to take a new direction in her life: plant a new church in one of the secularized neighborhoods of Amsterdam. She left her cherished high church liturgy, took off her gown which she had earned herself with much effort, and stepped down from the pulpit, to enter neighborhoods who were far from her beloved religious culture; without sufficient funds, a building, or whatsoever. Before she started the new ministry these neighborhoods no longer hosted a local congregation. In an early stage, she discovered that church renewal begins with faith renewal. And so, she herself rediscovered the power of the Holy Spirit and that Jesus was more than just a wise teacher. As a result, her confrontation with Amsterdam’s secular environment brought her to a more personal relationship with Jesus. Subsequently, her imitation of Jesus motivated her to look for people in the streets and cafés of Old West, and—more recently— in Amsterdam East. There, she began simply with reading Scripture, first alone, then slowly with others. Margrietha, a journalist reports, is someone who makes easy contacts, a woman with a friendly smile, understanding eyes, empathy and an intense interest in others. The community, entrusted to her care, exists mostly of people who live at the margins of society: drug addicts, poor, neglected, abused and homeless people. Reinders’ church visibly ‘plays’ in the world, gathering in bars and

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149 “Dat is voor mij altijd weer de kern: het christelijk geloof heeft iets unieks en radicaals dat de wereld kan veranderen—door liefde. Van meet af aan was voor mij duidelijk dat geweld en onderdrukking nooit een onderdeel kunnen zijn van Gods programma voor de wereld, nooit. Nooit.” Kuijper, “Het lef om weerloos te zijn,” 4-5.
restaurants. There, with a soft and gentle voice, amidst a talking crowd and the background music from a sound system, she communicates Jesus in simple and accessible language, drawing specifically on the stories of Scripture to help people find direction in life. The small community regards her as a true soul keeper. Somebody who represents Jesus himself. ‘Going into the world’, however, did not leave Reinders unaffected. She confesses: ‘I sometimes feel like a target. People cast their ridicule and cynicism upon me. I often feel vulnerable.’ Reinders aims to find her confidence in God, the one who sent her to this part of his world. Reinders strongly believes that Christ is there too, dressed in the washed up clothes that characterize the face of these streets: “And I walk with Him, I am his disciple. Why should I be afraid? People think: she is crazy; let them. I have something good to report.” Returning is her call to others, which she once explicitly pronounced at a symposium: “Dare to be odd. To be ‘a fool for Christ’. Brave, full of hope, and joyous with nothing.”

Reinders is an ordained minister who not directly fits the profile of most congregational churches in whose tradition this study is written. Nonetheless, she exemplifies the vulnerable authority that should characterize ministry today: the guts to be defenseless, to act upon God’s authority, despite her own limitations and fears. While many ministers hide behind a black academic gown, she left the stability of an existing church, and literally went out of her comfort zone. A place where she no longer controlled the outcome, but where she became dependent on the willingness of people to receive her. Somebody who represents Jesus by following in his footsteps and who speaks for Christ in places where his name is only used to curse. This is a literal improvisation of the gospel story. Is she also a prophet? Well, I think she is. The authority she exhibits does not depend on her physical appearance, an impressive voice, or social status, but it derives from her patient and gentle compassion to help people discover what it means to read the Bible as God’s Word. In this, she does not impose any authority on the basis of her intellectual and academic advantages, but she precedes the community by being Scripture’s first listener. Her authority flows from her courage to follow Christ against all odds, and the willingness to give of herself and share her life with others. Magrietha is an example of how existent structures of ordained ministry sometimes need to be stripped in other to better represent Jesus.

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5.4. Criterion 3: Interdependence

In the last section of this chapter we will discuss the third and final criterion for our retrieval of Browne’s theology of ordained ministry: *If a concept of ordained ministry is to be accepted it must be consistent with the charismatic gifts of the Spirit to the whole membership and constituent of a mutual interdependent character of the local church.* The criterion of interdependence aims to express the congregational concern for the ministerial involvement of every member in the common life of the church, and to avoid any theology of ordained ministry in which the minister becomes an independent or substitutive channel of grace apart from this community. Though in many ways the subject of interdependence has already appeared in the previous sections, namely an ordained minister’s relation to God’s mission (*missio Dei*, § 5.2.) and the relation to God’s authority and the community’s allegiance to Christ’s rule (§ 5.3.), in this final section we will further address the interrelationship between the ordained ministry and participative community. First, a final visit to Ephesians 4 will be made to consider further the coherence between the gifted community and the gift of ministers in § 5.4.1. Then, in § 5.4.2., Browne’s idea of the pre-given character of ordained ministry will be discussed, followed by an exploration of the interdependence of the missions of Word and Spirit in § 5.4.2. Afterward—from § 5.4.3. to § 5.4.6—we will successively consider the ministry in terms of Word and sacrament, the ‘covenantal realism’ of ordination, and the importance of collective government. And last but not least, this section ends with a ‘thicker’ concept of ministry in § 5.4.7., which is animated by the life story of Lesslie Newbigin.

5.4.1. Ephesians 4:11: One Last Time

In the previous explorations of Ephesians 4 we have already established that Paul’s letter does not subscribe to an antithesis between the recognition of an ‘official’ ministry and the charismatic community of saints (§ 5.2.1.). Likewise, we have found that ministerial authority should not be contrasted with the communal dimension of the church but rather embraced as Christ’s vehicle of ecclesial unity under his Lordship (§ 5.3.1.). In this paragraph, we continue our reading of Ephesians, specifically with regard to the question of interdependence between the so-called ‘charismata’ (1 Cor. 12:8-10; Rom. 12:3-8) and the listed ministries in Ephesians 4:11: How do they connect? And secondly, how should we interpret the relationship between the five listed ministries?

1. As stated before, it is central to Paul’s argument in the letter to the Ephesians that all Christians participate in the gift of ‘grace’ (χάρις, Eph. 4:7; cf. 1:13-14; 2:18-22; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; Rom. 12:6). Yet, there is some disagreement whether his reference to the term χάρις in verse 7 actually signifies the Spirit’s χαρίσματα, as assumed in a number of
commentaries, or must be read as a more general reference to salvific grace (cf. Rom. 12:6). In the twentieth century, leading New Testament scholars, such as Ernst Käsemann, Eduard Schweizer, and more recently James Dunn, effectively dismantled the official ministry with their exclusive charismatic paradigm of ministry in order to safeguard mutual interdependence. They strongly opposed the prevalent overriding interpretation in which the Spirit’s distribution of gifts was subordinated to the existing schemes of the official ministry. To them, ‘ministry’ simply means the exercise of a χαρίσμα and should not be ‘institutionalized’ in ministerial offices only available for some. Correspondingly, Gordon Fee, in his reading of Ephesians 4:11, admittedly aware of the absence of χαρίσματα, simply assumes that this “enumeration almost certainly has to do with function, not with office” and that these persons “are to function in light of that gifting.” This line of argumentation also informs James McClendon’s and Miroslav Volf’s understanding of ministry (§ 1.6.1. and § 1.6.3.), in which charismatic capability has become the sole impetus for (official) ministry. It is also the main reason for John Colwell’s respective objection against the excessive influence of the Charismatic movement on this point (§ 1.4.). A different perspective is provided by the Baptist scholar Max Turner. He challenges the lumping together of all ministry under the header of charismatic expressions and the anti-thesis between χαρίσματα and church offices. First, he claims that χαρίσματα derives linguistically not from the noun χάρις but from the verb χαρίζομαι and should be taken as a general reference to various kinds of ‘gracious gifts’ and not distinctly as a technical term for a supernatural pneumatic event. Second, that the emphasis on

153 See for example Bruce, The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians, 339-340; Lincoln, Ephesians, 241; Talbert, Ephesians and Colossians, 109; Shkul, Reading Ephesians, 168n49; and Thielman, Ephesians, 263-264. William Larkin is a bit ambivalent in his interpretation when he translates χάρις here with “ministry grace”. Larkin, Ephesians, 74.

154 See Sellin, Der Brief an die Epheser, 329-330.


156 See Dunn, Unity and Diversity in the New Testament, 117: “Ministry was evidently undertaken at the immediate behest of the Spirit or of a vision—and that was regarded as authority enough.”

157 Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 707. Fee does however admit that his explanation of Ephesians 4:11 in relation to the charismata is debatable, as it is largely dependent on “the circuitous route of usage” in 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Romans 12:6-8 (708); Cf. Dunn, Unity and Diversity in the New Testament, 122.

158 See Turner, The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts, esp. 262-267; cf. Herman Ridderbos, Paulus: Ontwerp van zijn theologie (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1966), 493-494; Lombard, “Charisma and Church Office,” 43-45; and Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 32-35. Though Fee takes it to be a derivative of χάρις, he agrees with Turner that it is erroneous to translate χαρίσμα exclusively as ‘spiritual gift’. Cornelis van der Kooi, is his recent theological assessment of the charisma(ta), initially denies its distinctive technical use in the New Testament, but then, following the work of Norbert Baumert (see his Charisma-Taufe-Geisttaufe, 2001), he still opts for a recalibration on par with its contemporary use as a special, supernatural and renewing capability granted to individual persons independent from Word, sacrament and ministerial office (see his Tegenwoordigheid van Geest: Verkenningen op het gebied van de leer van de Heilige Geest
functions in Paul’s writings should not be taken as a rejection, nor even as ignorance regarding their existence. 159 Rather, he notes that we should,

accept that some of the charismatic functions were simultaneously church ‘offices’ (at least of a rudimentary type)—if by ‘office’ we mean a function (i) with an element of permanency, (ii) recognised by the church (e.g. with a title), (iii) authorized and hallowed in some way, (iv) with formal commissioning (e.g. through the laying on of hands), and possibly (v) legitimated (e.g. through letters of commendation), and (vi) remunerated.”160

Turner breaks through the arbitrary contrasting of functions and offices which we found with Dunn and Fee, shedding light on the formalization of certain charismatic functions within the church that have consequently received a certain official character.161 In a more recent article, Turner applies his argument more explicitly to Ephesians 4 and describes the character of the Spirit in Ephesians as the one who presents (ἀρραβὼν, Eph. 13-14) and provides access to (προσαγωγὴν, Eph. 2:18-22) the reality of Christ’s cosmic reconciliation for both Jews and gentiles (cf. τῷ συνδέσμῳ τῆς εἰρήνης, Eph. 4:3).162 Ephesians 4:7-16 subsequently explains the gifts of Christ as support to the church’s communal maturation in Christ (ἀνάρτα τέλειον, Eph. 4:13; cf. 3:18): “It is congregational conformity to Christ as the epitome of the goal for cosmic re-unification.”163 Correspondingly, Turner reasons that we should not consider the Spirit’s gifts as individual and miraculous enhancements, but rather as the broad category of provisions that serve the church’s spiritual transformation, namely “corporate and cosmic re-unification summed up in Christ.”164 In a nutshell, we should consider church offices as part and parcel of the Spirit’s distribution of gifts.165

Though I appreciate how Dunn and others have recovered an appreciation for the charismatic ministry of the whole church, it is unfortunate that the Christ-ordained
gifts in specific persons are sacrificed, notably evident in Ephesians 4:11, as elsewhere (cf. 1 Cor. 4:1-2; 2 Cor. 5:20; Gal. 1:15-16). This leads up—in effect—to an unnecessary narrowing of the concept of ministry. Turner’s approach, on the other hand, allows for a less sharp division between the Spirit’s regular and extraordinary gifts, consequently allowing for a more interrelated and integrated perspective on the pneumatic gifts and church office. This is not unlike Robert Browne, who also recognized knowledge, age and right ancestry as part of the Spirit’s gifts (§ 3.4.4.). However, Max Turner also includes church offices within the spectrum of spiritual gifts. Although his proposal envisions a broader category of ministry in which office and χαρίσμα coexist—and thus overcomes the either/or interpretation of Dunn—it is in the end not so different: both charismatic and official ministries are gifts of the Spirit. Additionally, it remains a bit arbitrary to choose which gifts are formalized into offices and which are not. As a result, an exclusive pneumatic approach leads to the complete evaporation of the Christological character that marks these ministries; a perspective this present study seeks to retrieve. Namely, as Andrew Lincoln phrases it: “to assert that the ministers are gifts of the exalted Christ, rather than merely officers created by the Church.”

For the twelve were not only empowered by the Spirit at Pentecost, it was first Christ who instituted their calling before his ascension (“you will be my witnesses,” Acts 1:8). Likewise Paul may indeed be moved and empowered by the Spirit in Antioch (Acts 13:2), yet it was predominantly Christ’s calling that ‘made him’ an apostle (Acts 9:15; 26:16; cf. Gal. 1:1, 15-16). In other words, there is a specific Christological institution preceding the Spirit’s endowment, which separates the ‘ministry of some’ from the ‘ministry of all’. Hence, every Christian might be charismatically gifted to participate responsibly in the church, yet not every Christian is thereby also a ‘Christological gift’ as well to be a minister (within) the church. The difference between ordained and non-ordained is thus not determined by having or not having χαρίσματα, since spiritual gifts—including the gift of leadership as Volf proposes (§ 1.6.3.)—do not institute ministerial office. Even though this answers not all questions, it can be stated on the basis of our analyses of Ephesians 4:11, that Paul speaks distinctively about the work of Christ and the work of the Spirit in a manner that nowhere belittles or denigrates those who do not display such specific charismata: a distinction which should prevent us from condensing ‘ministry’ either to the ‘ordained

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166 Lincoln, Ephesians 248-249.
167 Although not in so many words, Dunn is willing to recognize that there is something ‘extra’ to the apostolic ministry, which also explains in his view why the apostles are listed first in Ephesians 4:11. However, it has no implications for his subsequent theology of ministry. See his Unity and Diversity in the New Testament, 120-121, 123.
168 Cf. “Christ is the content office. He grants the divine authority to it; through his charismata bestows the individual with the competence, ability, efficiency and willingness for service.” Lombard, “Charisma and Church Office,” 48.
169 Cf. “Every Christian has a gift (Rom 12:4; 1 Cor 12:7, 11), but not everyone holds an office.” Talbert, Ephesians and Colossians, 112.
few’ or to a ‘charismatic all’. Interdependence, it can be concluded, needs to account for these two distinct, yet interconnected, forms of ministry.

2. The subsequent question is how we should interpret the interdependence between these five ministries? Overall, there is agreement that Paul did not intend to write an exhaustive list, nor a definitive model for church ministry. Something we already found with Hauerwas (§ 4.2.1.). Arguably, as Barentsen shows, the enumeration of Ephesians 4:11 is given in a context which specific attempts to include the local ministries into the divine diverse provision of ministry—starting with the apostles: “Evangelists, pastors and teachers are portrayed as divinely legitimated leaders, maintaining the unity of the community amidst social change. They are portrayed as a leadership subgroup functioning on a collegial level next to the apostles and prophets.”

Earlier Paul already referred to ‘apostles and prophets’ (Eph. 2:19-21; 3:5) as ‘the foundation of the church’ and bearers of ‘the mystery of Christ’. Barentsen comments accordingly, “that they were uniquely privileged speakers in the Christ-movement.” Apostles and prophets were understood as divinely commissioned leaders who served the church in its foundational period. Prophecy is in this instance a broader category than only foretelling the future, it is building the church by encouragement, correction and instruction (cf. 1 Cor. 14:3, 31).

Sometimes the use of the word ‘foundational’ is directly equaled with the word ‘temporal’ and thereby reckoned to have passed with the apostolic age, like for example Bucer and Calvin did in the sixteenth century (§ 2.3.1. and § 2.3.2.) and Charles Spurgeon in the nineteenth century (§ 1.6.2.). According to Barentsen, this strict distinction ignores the actual argument of Ephesians 4:11, indicating the ecclesiological expansion of the generic ministry of the apostles the local ministries: “Since Ephesians connects the first two with foundational ministries beyond the scope of Asia Minor, they

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170 Barentsen, Emerging Leadership in the Pauline Mission, 152; Lincoln, Ephesians, xciv, 249; and Van Kooten, Cosmic Christology in Paul and the Pauline School, 186. Contra Shkul, Reading Ephesians, 197: “In my view, the discourse constructs an implicit hierarchy whereby Paul holds the supreme position (3.1-5), and communal leaders operate their gifting mobilizing the whole community in the transformation into Christlikeness and maturity, while all are gifted by ‘Christ’.”

171 Thielman, Ephesians, 273-274. Thielman specifically explains the ‘foundational role’ of the apostles and prophets in relation to their role in taking the gospel to the Gentiles.

172 Barentsen, Emerging Leadership in the Pauline Mission, 167.

173 Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 708. Though ‘prophets’ could suggest a linkage with the history of Israel’s prophets, the context of Ephesians probably suggest that its meaning is confined to the church. See Shkul, Reading Ephesians, 160 n36; also Ridderbos, Paulus, 503-504.

174 See for exegetes who suggest a similar interpretation Ridderbos, Paulus, 501-503; Bruce, The Epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians, 346-347; and Lincoln, Ephesians, 249-252; A ‘cessationist’ view regarding the apostolic ministry also appears to be assumed by Dunn, Unity and Diversity in the New Testament, 121: “Furthermore we should also note that because the uniqueness of the apostle’s role and authority no category of church ‘office’ is adequate to describe his function: he was not appointed by the Church, and Paul certainly did not conceive of any succeeding to his apostleship (1 Cor. 15.8—’last of all’; 4.9—the last act in the world arena before the end.” Cf. Shkul, Reading Ephesians, 198n16.
represent non-local leaders, suggesting that the latter three are local.”\(^{175}\) Most commentators have included the evangelists with the itinerant ministries (cf. Acts 21:8; 2 Tim. 4:5).\(^{176}\) With the possible exception of the evangelist, contemporary scholarship largely endorses Robert Browne’s interpretation (§ 3.4.2.), who seems to have differentiated between supra-local and local ministries. Seen from this perspective, Ephesians 4:11 articulates the interdependence between different ministerial roles in as much as they are all gifts of Christ for the upbuilding of his church. To sum up, the intention of Paul’s enumeration is to draw attention to the various contextual ministries (both supra-local and local) yet associated teaching ministries as a testimony of the continuous provision of the ‘one Lord’ Jesus Christ.\(^{177}\)

The difference then, between apostles and pastors should therefore not be explained in terms of hierarchy, but by their chronological role in salvation history—and particularly by the context in which they are placed (or ‘given’). Ephesians 4:11 is to be interpreted as Paul’s ratification of local ministries alongside the established and recognized ministry of apostles and prophets, to continue the communication of the gospel in the context of the local church (cf. 1 Cor. 12:28).\(^{178}\) Of special interest in this study are particularly the last two mentioned ministries, i.e. the local offices, which are connected by a single τοὺς δὲ construction. This juxtaposition of pastor and teacher, however, does not automatically imply that the ministries of ‘pastor’ (ποιμήν; ‘shepherd’) and ‘teacher’ (διδάσκαλος) need to coincide in one person.\(^{179}\) For a comparison, we note

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\(^{175}\) Barentsen, *Emerging Leadership in the Pauline Mission*, 169. Barentsen does state that the text itself does not provide enough information to be conclusive. For example he has a proviso with regard to the role of the evangelists.

\(^{176}\) Bruce, *The Epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 347; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 249-251; Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 707; and Thielman, *Ephesians*, 274-275. The term ‘evangelists’ is fairly rare in the New Testament and only used in two other places (Acts 21:8; 2 Tim. 4:5). As these references do not particularly shed much more light on its precise meaning, Thielman therefore approaches its presumed use by a comparison with the εὐαγγέλιον (good news, gospel) and εὐαγγέλιζω (bring good news, evangelize) and concludes: “Evangelists, then, are probably those whom God has especially equipped to travel from place to place with the good news of peace through Christ” (275). In this way, he joins Lincoln’s earlier assessment (see *Ephesians*, 250), in which evangelists are considered as a derivative of the apostolic ministry, with the only difference of lacking a direct connection to the historical Jesus.

\(^{177}\) Cf. “the burden of the author seems to be to portray the local leaders as prototypical and self-sacrificial, similar to the apostles and prophets.” Barentsen, *Emerging Leadership in the Pauline Mission*, 169. I think Gordon Fee is right, however, when he warns us not to place these categories too strictly onto the text and differentiate too heavily between the universal church and its local expressions. See Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 708.

\(^{178}\) See Barentsen, *Emerging Leadership in the Pauline Mission*, 297, 309-310. Also Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and the Spiritual Gifts*, 269. He understands the parallel listing of apostles, prophets and teachers in 1 Cor. 12:28 as an anti-elitist correction of the Corinthian concentration on inspired speech and the gift of tongues, emphasizing these functions to be “God’s gifts to the interdependent spiritual body, and by the same token the abilities enabling teachers (etc.) to function are no less ‘spiritual’ than those vaunted by any self-styled pneumatikoi.” Michael Horton writes similarly: “All of the ‘gifts’ named are ministers of the Word.” Horton, “Ephesians 4:1-16,” 139.

\(^{179}\) See Larkin, *Ephesians*, 78: “The τοὺς . . . ποιμήνας καὶ διδάσκαλους construction should be viewed as a hendiadys” and therefore denote one and the same ministry (viz. “teaching shepherd”). Cf. also Bruce, *The Epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 347-348. The noun ‘shepherd’ in the context of ministry might be rare, but as Bruce comments, “the derivative verb ‘to shepherd’ is used several times in this sense, and the noun ‘flock’ (also derived from the noun meaning ‘shepherd’) is used of the church” (347). Cf. Horton, “Ephesians 4:1-16,” 139.
that, though Paul uses only a single τῶν to connect apostles and prophets in Ephesians 2:20, he did consider them as two distinctive forms of ministry.\textsuperscript{180} Andrew Lincoln offers a valuable suggestion: “It is more likely that they were overlapping functions, but that while almost all pastors were also teachers, not all teachers were also pastors.”\textsuperscript{181} Of course, no hard conclusion can be drawn from this observation. But it does concur with Browne’s reading of this text, as he explicitly recognized pastors and teachers as two distinctive forms of ordained ministry within a local church (§ 3.5.1). Interesting is Kevin Vanhoozer’s similar suggestion when he follows Calvin’s distinction between pastors and theological professors (§ 4.4.2.). Yet of course, this distinction does not imply that pastoring and teaching were to be the exclusive privilege of these ministries. Instruction, for example, is also described as the life stream of the church in which every Christian participates (cf. Col. 3:16).\textsuperscript{182} Paul seems to imply the same in his prayer recorded in Ephesians 3:18–19, where only ‘together with all the saints’ (σὺν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἁγίοις) the love of God can be grasped (καταλαβέσθαι, ‘learned’, ‘understood’) and known (γνῶναι). Browne too insisted that ‘any might protest, appeal, complain, exhort, dispute, reprove’ (§ 3.5.4.). The role of the given ministries, again, is not to displace every Christian’s ministry, but rather to enable—or, as the text itself puts it—‘equip’ the saints. This is also something which is specifically articulated in Hauerwas’s explanation of this text, as he describes ordained ministers as a divine gift to remember the community repeatedly of its story (§ 4.2.1.).

It seems, nonetheless, inconsistent that Ephesians 4:11 lacks the familiar ministerial vocabulary found in other books of the New Testament, such as bishop (ἐπίσκοπος),\textsuperscript{183} elder (πρεσβυτέρος), deacon (διακόνος) and widow (χήρα, cf. Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Tim. 3:1, 8; 4:14; 5:17). The most simple solution is to attribute these differences to pseudepigraphic developments. But nowhere in Ephesians, nor across even the New Testament, is there any hint of conflict between Paul’s early charismatic structure and these later developments.\textsuperscript{184} Another possibility is to explain the differences on the basis of χαρίσματα (viz. Eph. 4:11) and offices (viz. the Pastoral epistles).\textsuperscript{185} However, as we already established, the list of Ephesians 4:11 cannot be reduced to spiritual gifts, nor to the work of the Spirit. Most commentators, therefore, suggest to harmonize the differences by way of 1 Peter 5:1-4 where elders are called upon to shepherd (ποιμάνατε) God’s flock and keep watch (ἐπισκοποῦντες), as F.F. Bruce, Andrew Lincoln, and Frank

\textsuperscript{180} Thielman, Ephesians, 275.
\textsuperscript{181} Lincoln, Ephesians, 250. Contra Sellin, Der Brief an die Epheser, 341. Sellin proposes ‘shepherd and teacher’ (ποιμένας καὶ διδάσκαλους) to be one and the same in which the former descriptor "eine metaphorische Prädizierung is" of the office of teacher.
\textsuperscript{182} Cf. Thielman, Ephesians, 276.
\textsuperscript{183} It must be said that 1 Timothy 3 refers to a singular ‘bishop’ (3:1) and to ‘deacons’ in plural (3:8).
\textsuperscript{184} Cf. “Nowhere else in the letter is there the slightest trace of a tension between the ecclesiastical structures of the earlier Pauline mission and those of later episcopacy.” Lincoln, Ephesians, 233.
\textsuperscript{185} See for example Ridderbos, Paulus, 510.
Thielman do. It basically takes ‘pastors and teachers’ to be interchangeable words for bishops and elders. In a way, it is the strategy of Browne, in which he—like Calvin before him (§ 2.3.2.)—makes also a harmonization effort, when adding elders to the list in his explanation of this text (§ 3.4.2.). A more fruitful approach, one that better reflects the internal differences within the New Testament, as well as denotes the consistency and continuity intended by Ephesians 4:11, is to interpret the listed ministries in a more contextual way. For example, John Collins explains the absence by pointing to the ministerial 'limitedness' of the listed ministries: “each of these titles designating an engagement in ministry of the Word. In this way, Paul was making clear that the responsibilities of teachers in the forming and maintaining of a church are foremost.” Also Talbert and Thielman declare these five ministries as mainly verbal activities. Jack Barentsen, similarly, approaches the list of Ephesians 4:11 as a contextual example of Paul’s general concern with the institution of standardized leadership patterns to provide continuity and stability: “it is unlikely that Paul intended for these uniform patterns to become normative in their specific structures. It is doubtful that a specific two or threefold structure of leadership ([bishop]-elder-deacon), or their specific titles, can be normative in themselves, except in so far as they contribute towards the long-term maintenance of Christian social identity.” Specific titles and structures may vary from place to place and from time to time, when the purpose and role converged in the general concern for the provision of the gospel within the context of local communities. Hence, Christ’s gift of ministers is to establish the church with operators of the Word. Browne’s concept of ‘messenger’ rather adequately captures this concern. The same is true of both Hauerwas’s and Vanhoozer’s idea of the minister as ‘speech agent’ (§ 4.4.). Though a variety of ministries may exist within diverse places, there is a continuity with regard to the importance of a ‘ministry of the Word’. A ministry directed at the ‘speech’ of all Christians, who are ‘to speak truth in love’ as a manifestation of their shared identity in Christ (Eph. 4:15). In other words, the listed ministries are never intended to identify the sole participants in the ministry of the church, but rather to point out a particular

186 See for example Bruce, *The Epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 348; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 233, 250-251; and Thielman, *Ephesians*, 276.
187 Collins, *Deacons and the Church*, 82; also his “Ordained and Other Ministries,” 28: “This diakonia was not a ‘ministry’ given to the whole church but was in fact the privilege, responsibility and burden of those few chosen to deliver the Word in the name of God, Christ and Spirit.” Cf. Barentsen, *Emerging Leadership in the Pauline Mission*, 300, 302.
ministerial provision, in order that the gift of the ministry of the Word builds up the church’s corporate existence as Christian community.

We can conclude, that the list provided to us in Ephesians 4:11 should not be read as a comprehensive blueprint for church ministry, but rather as an indicative paradigm, pointing toward connectedness between Christ as Lord, the church and its ministry. It expresses the contextual continuation of the ministry of the Word, from the church’s birth and its foundation on the testimony of the apostles, to its local appearances in pastors and teachers in the Ephesians context. Ministries which manifest that authority of Christ as the Lord of the church.

5.4.2. Browne’s Contribution 3: The Pre-Given Character
Our last visit to the letter of Ephesus showed us emphatically the difficulty we have in going from Scripture to ecclesiology and church polity. Not only because the New Testament material itself is often *ad hoc*, incomplete and highly contextual, but also since we as contemporary readers cannot detach ourselves from the particular traditions in which we are formed. Being aware of our limitations, however, does not mean that nothing can be said with regard to a theology of ordained ministry in relation to this text. Since, as Nicholas Healy writes, “its function is to aid the concrete church in performing its tasks of witness and pastoral care within what I will call its ‘ecclesiological context.’”

In the same way, we need to retrieve Browne’s contributions to stimulate a contemporary theology of ordained ministry which strengthens the interdependent nature of congregational ecclesiology. For—much like today’s antipathy against the elitist and omnipotent clergyman (§1.4.)—Browne resented the singularity of the bishop’s office and anticipated a more communal and plural practice of official ministry (§ 3.7.). In this he was not alone, but he followed the example of the continental reformers who sought to mediate between the exclusivist sacerdotal priestly office and a complete dissolution of ordained offices on the basis of the Spirit’s inhabitation (§ 2.3.).

1. According to Browne, the character of ordained ministry is predetermined by Christ’s provisionary care to be a messenger of his Word. Using the term ‘messenger’ conspicuously prevents the characterizing of the ministry in terms of the priesthood. Ministry is a matter of embassy and agency and not of ontology. This is what we meant by ‘pre-given’ in Chapter 3. A local church may examine and appoint an ordained minister, but it can never determine its character since this is rooted in Christ’s (com)mission. Browne’s idea of the pre-given character of ordained ministry should be understood against the background of the Church of England who in his view changed this pre-given character of ministry by letting incompetent ministers enter into parish ministry who were incapable of writing their own sermons from the Scriptures and, instead, had to rely on the *Books of Homilies* (1547, 1571) such as written by Thomas

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191 Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology*, 38.
Cranmer and John Jewel (§ 3.6.). This so-called ‘dumb ministry’ was, therefore, no real ministry of Christ, since these ministers could not deliver the message for which they were sent, which essentially was to apply Scripture to its contextual significance. In short, the pre-given character of ordained ministry ensured in Browne’s view the peculiar form of ministry that is often termed the ‘ministry of the Word’ (*ministerium verbi*), with which ordained ministers are entrusted. Essentially through the explanation and application of Scripture, Christ’s rule is exercised and people are invited to participate in his covenantal rule. It is striking that Hauerwas and Vanhoozer likewise appeal to Ephesians 4:11 to ensure the ‘pre-given character’ of ordained ministry in response to the people’s individual expectations and thus aim to prevent the pastoral ministry from becoming a ‘marionette’ of the church’s likings (§ 4.2.). It is important to notice, furthermore, that in Browne’s thought the predetermined character of ministerial office in no way conflicted with the spiritual gifts. Rather, he seems to presume some kind of interaction between the Christological charge to ministerial office and the gifts required to exercise this office (§ 3.3.2. and § 3.4.2.). And while the presence of spiritual gifts can be a motive for inquiring if someone is called to official ministry, it is never the same nor automatically assumed. To put it differently, spiritual gifts do not equal ordination, as Volf suggests (§ 1.6.3.) Browne speaks, above all, in general terms about the gift of the Spirit as a characteristic of true believers and the internal motivator to obedience to Christ (§ 3.3.2. and § 3.4.2.). And furthermore, his emphasis on the ordained minister as *ministerium verbi* is nowhere exclusive. The whole church shared in the calling of speaking the Word of God (§ 3.5.2). The only difference between ordained ministry and every Christian’s ministry is the public context in which ordained ministers are called. Exactly the same distinction is made by Kevin Vanhoozer, who describes the ordained minister as the community’s ‘public intellectual’ to build up the church toward Christ (§ 4.4.2.). In other words, ordained ministry is a means with an eschatological proviso, to sustain the congregation in their covenantal bond with God, until the final restoration of happiness.

2. Following the pre-given character, Browne understands ordination as an actual convergence of the Christological charge and the congregational reception. In contrast with the episcopal ordination which happened without the involvement of the local community, Browne described ordination as a covenantal event through which the specific candidate was visibly included in the church’s covenantal relationship, and designated as a *personnel gift* to sustain their covenantal calling. Ordination, therefore, is a sign of the church’s covenant that marks ‘official’ ministry within the church. To Browne, office hangs together with the public role. More specifically: it is through ordination that the church shares in the gift of ordained ministry and is thus reminded of God’s covenantal care. Browne basically teaches us to see the reception of ordained ministry as a communal action and breaks down our individualist understanding thereof.
For—as ordained ministry rests upon God’s covenental presence within the community—the minister acts on behalf of this covenant. Thus, the minister acts not as individual person as such, but as a representative of Christ based upon the church covenant: being a covenantal agent. This is how we should understand ‘ordained’: not as a physical change within the specific candidate but as a change within the covenental relations. Like most reformers, Browne had no difficulty with the ordination rite, the laying on of hands, but only with its ‘magical’ associations. Spurgeon’s short-sighted presentation of ordination as a ‘fragment of popery’ (§ 1.6.2.), therefore, does no justice toward Browne’s covenental practice. Nor does McClendon’s construal—ordination as ‘a further step in holiness’ (§ 1.6.1.)—adequately capture Browne’s concept of ordination. For ordination does not make a person holy, but contains rather ‘a charge to that calling’ (§ 3.4.4.). According to Browne, ordination makes a candidate part of the covenant of the church and thereby part of the rule of Christ. The divine calling is therefore not to be used as a weapon against the congregation with whom a minister is in a covenental relation, but taken as a ‘charge’ not to give in to the temptation and pressure of becoming a marionette of the interests of the civil government. An aspect which receives an interesting parallel with Hauerwas’s protest against ministers who have become a ‘helping profession’ for the people’s consumer mentality and America’s liberal-democracy (§ 4.2.1.).

3. Another point is Browne’s particular interpretation of Ephesians 4:11, in which he differs from his context. He exhibits a more open mind regarding the permanent relevance of all listed ministries, existing in supra-local and local offices. This becomes all the more interesting considering the renewed attention for prophetic speech among seventeenth-century Brownists, which basically consisted in a extemporaneous Biblical exhortation as the Spirit indicated. Though Browne is in many ways indebted to the continental reformers, he particularly differentiates from their legacy with regard to his recognition of the dual fashion of local ordained ministry. While existing in two offices, a pastor and a teacher, they are essentially one particular ministry the Word. This dual approach to ordained ministry precludes any notion of a singular minister as center of congregational life of whom the whole church is dependent. At the same time, the pastor and teacher have their own ministerial emphasis as a testimony to God’s versatile speech of both exhortation and instruction. Both offices are ordained to nourish God’s people through Word and sacrament. Though both offices are Word-ministries, the pastor in his view clearly represented the more senior position, responsible for preaching and pastoral duties. The teacher assists the pastor in his educational duties, for example by doctrinal education. Through the ministry of the Word, God himself invites people to

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join in his covenant of happiness. Likewise, preaching is a constitutive act to the administration of the sacraments.

5.4.3. Office and Charisma: The Missions of Word and Spirit

Our reading of Ephesians showed that the question, whether χαρίσμα determines a church office or vice versa, to be essentially rooted in a tension between Christology and pneumatology. Some scholars have sought to solve this unease by locating the interdependence between ordained ministry (office) and the spiritual giftedness of the community (χαρίσματα) within pneumatology, such as we observed with Spurgeon and Volf (§ 1.6.2. and § 1.6.3.). But an exclusive pneumatic approach fails to attend to the distinct Christological character of ordained ministry, as we found in the letter to the Ephesians and Browne’s interpretation, which both Hauerwas and Vanhoozer deem crucial to ordained ministry. As a result the peculiarity (Lt. proprium) of ordained ministry—what we have called its ‘pre-given’ character—has been left behind. Additionally, argues Hauerwas, when χαρίσμα carries an office ordained ministry, it is reduced to mere ability—such as the exercise of leadership—and consequently misses to indicate the ‘order’ in which the church placed this person (§ 4.4.1.). A critique which is also raised by John Colwell’s opposition toward the influences of the charismatic movement and its functionalistic understanding of ordained ministry (§ 1.4.). Without taking over his sacerdotalistic solution, I do agree with his diagnosis. Regrettably, the relationship between office and charisma is not addressed by Hauerwas and Vanhoozer at any length. However, before moving into detail about the pre-given character of ordained ministry, it is sensible to reflect upon the tension between office and charisma from the perspective of the missions of Christ and Spirit.

As noted before, the calling to ordained ministry has a distinct Christological structure, denoting a ‘charge’ to a certain role. Charisma, on the other hand, has a predominant pneumatological structure, an empowerment to a certain task. Throughout his work, Cornelis van der Kooi repeatedly emphasizes the need to distinguish between Christ and Spirit as ‘two missions’ of God which cannot be (entirely) identified nor reduced to one another. Christology and pneumatology may be joined (Acts 1:8), but these two are not identical (1 Cor. 12:28-31). Christ’s incarnation and ascension is a different actus divinae than the outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh (cf. John 16:5-7), yet

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193 See also Willimon, Pastor, 37-38; and Leo J. Koffeman, In Order to Serve: Church Polity in Ecumenical Contexts (Church Polity and Ecumenism: Global Perspectives, Bd. 1; Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2014), 115.
195 Cf. “Wanneer we de zending van de Zoon en de zending van de Geest geheel op elkaar leggen of tot elkaar reduceren, is de kans groot dat we geen recht meer kunnen doen aan het bijbelse verhaal en onze eigen ervaring met dat verhaal. Het christologische en het pneumatologische zijn dogmatisch gezien twee gezichtspunten, waaronder we ons leven ten overstaan van God moeten verstaan.” Van der Kooi, Tegenwoordigheid van Geest, 68; and “Naar een ‘theologia in via’,” 246-257; also Van den Brink and Van der Kooi, Christelijke dogmatiek, 554-557. They recognize a Christological and pneumatological side to church offices as well as the charismata.
it is Christ incarnate who was anointed with the Spirit and who subsequently directed the Spirit to his church in order that they might live Christoform: “The relationship is dialectical. The Son is sent in the power of the Spirit, and the Spirit is poured out by risen Lord. . . The two are partners in the work of redemption.” There is an intense ‘interaction’ between Christ and Spirit, as is also apparent in our analyses of Ephesians, where the Spirit serves the cosmic Christ. Or, to put it differently, the unity between pneumatology and Christology lies in their eschatological end: the Spirit realizes what is realized in Christ’s resurrection. The tension between Christ and Spirit in the present-day brings us back to the tension between Word and Spirit in the Reformation era. It is a tension which not seldom led to a breach between various groups and traditions. In Chapter 2, we have established that Bucer, more than Calvin, sought to balance his theology between sacerdotalism and spiritualism in order to hold together both the gift of the ministry of the Word and the gifted community (§ 2.3.1 and § 2.3.2). While sometimes accused from being within the Anabaptist camp (§ 1.3.), Browne always remained firmly ‘Puritan’ in his conviction of the mutual cooperation of Word and Spirit. He therefore refused to acknowledge the presence of the Spirit in English parishes when lacking a preaching ministry (§ 3.6.1.). In the same way, though only minutely developed, Browne argued that the Christological charge to ordained office needed to be paralleled by the presence of spiritual gifts, notably including knowledge and the ability to teach (§ 3.4.3.). The cooperation between Christ and Spirit becomes most evident in his claim that the divine charge could be conveyed by prophecy, a vision or a dream, or some special work of the Spirit in a person’s conscience (§ 3.4.5.).

Following Browne, we should consider Word and Spirit not as opposites but as two mutual supportive ‘missions’. Word and Spirit are God’s ‘two creative hands’, as Christoph Schwöbel repeats Irenaeus of Lyon, through which the church participates


199 See further Jan Martijn Abrahamse, “‘Is Smyth also Among the Brownists?’ A Confrontation Between John Smyth and his Predecessor Robert Browne,” BQ 46, no. 3 (2015): 103-112. It is significant to observe that Smyth, in contrast to Browne, employed a more dualistic approach to Word and Spirit. Smyth even commended that Bible translations should be brought outside the meeting room before the so-called prophesying could begin.

200 “God acts as God is and so he acts through his two hands: the Word and the Spirit.” Schwöbel, “God’s Two Hands,” 25.
in the *missio Dei*. Vanhoozer similarly speaks of the ‘holy prompts’ of the Theo-drama (§ 4.2.2.). It is this interrelatedness of Word and Spirit that should inform our understanding of the interdependence of office and charisma.\(^{201}\) For the same reason Vanhoozer conceives of the ordained minister as ‘assistant director’ of the Holy Spirit, who is the ultimate director of the church’s performances. Hence, the language of ‘office’ (Lt. *officium*, or German: *Amt*, Dutch: *ambt*) adequately continues the Biblical concept of διακονία as a mandated and representative role of ‘the ministry of the Word’ but not at the cost of the charismatic or pneumatic nature of the church. In the same way, Browne used the term ‘office’ together with ‘messenger’. Ephesians 4:11, though certainly not exhaustive, does denote these ministers to be ‘pre-given’ messengers as they have their origin Christ’s institutive calling and commission to represent his Word amidst the congregation.\(^{202}\) Ordained ministers may exercise their office ‘through the power of the Spirit’, yet their charge is to bring Christ’s Word and stimulate spiritual growth and charismatic participation (Eph. 4:15-16).\(^{203}\) The Spirit enables and teaches ministers to adequately represent Christ’s character and reminds them that they are just as dependent and fallible as the rest of the community (cf. 2 Cor. 4:7).\(^{204}\) Hence, a minister’s sanctification is not accomplished through ordination but by way of accountable discipleship as we noted earlier (see § 5.3.5.).

The spiritual gifts enable and empower the church, including its offices, to participate in Christ’s body and dynamically engage in their priestly mission. Church offices, due to their more stable character as representatives of Christ’s Word, offer understanding of what it means to be missionary. As the Spirit broadens the church’s horizon and incorporates the church in God’s mission, Christ’s Word testifies of the character and course of this mission: ‘the fullness of Christ’ (Eph. 4:13).\(^{205}\) Consequently, the church’s participation in God’s mission runs through the sharing in Word and Spirit, both in office and charisma. The Spirit’s gifts should therefore not be narrowed down to the ‘special’ and ‘supernatural’ as his distribution of gifts includes also the natural.\(^{206}\) Church offices, therefore, do not stand over against the congregation (Dutch: *tegenover*),

\(^{201}\) Cf. Thomas C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* (New York: HarperCollins, 1983), esp. 64-81. Oden rightly discerns between the order of the ministerial offices which continue the ministry of Christ and the spiritual gifts which empower both these orders as well as the whole church to fulfill its mission. See also Allan J. Janssen, *Kingdom, Office, and Church: A Study of A. A. van Ruler’s Doctrine of Ecclesiastical Office* (The Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America, no. 53; Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2006), esp. 140-150. Janssen adequately works out Van Ruler’s theology of ordained ministry that reflects his idea of the twofold mission of Christ and Spirit.


\(^{206}\) *Contra* Van de Beek, *Lichaaen en Geest van Christus*, 478-486.
as sometimes assumed on the basis of Christological representation.\textsuperscript{207} John Colwell carries this thought much too far when he argues for ordained ministry as a ‘separated living sacrament’ (§ 1.4.). It has to be said that similar language is adopted by Hauerwas, especially in his more recent work (§ 5.4.1.). However, by placing the ordained ministry over against the community, the ministry is disconnected from its covenental basis and brought into the sphere of the absolute. While the character of ministry itself originates in Christ (‘pre-given’), ministers themselves do not attain a ‘reverend’ status.\textsuperscript{208} Browne aptly reminds us that ordained ministry emerges from Christ’s covenental presence among the faithful as his gift to keep his church to their covenental identity. Therefore ordained office is, as stated above, dependent on both Christ’s sending and its communal reception (see § 5.3.2.). ‘Offices’ are institutionalized gifts of Christ as they are embedded within the covenental community.\textsuperscript{209} Moreover, the ‘over against’ description would contradict with the minister’s accountable role whose prophetic authority is exercised through exemplary discipleship amidst the congregation as we discussed earlier (§ 5.3.5). Church offices are merely ‘means’ of Christ, not Christ himself: ‘they preach not themselves but Jesus Christ as Lord’ (cf. 2 Cor. 4:5). Ministers remind their fellow disciples of Christ as the ‘wholly Other’ and goal of spiritual life (Eph. 4:12-13).

Although we have recognized how the tension between church offices and the gifts of the Spirit can be traced back to a tension between Christology and pneumatology, both ordained office and the spiritual gifts are ‘gifts’ for interaction, gifts which testify of God’s two hands by which he shapes his church. The interdependence between ordained ministry and the congregation is thus grounded in the interplay of the one Spirit and one Christ (Eph. 4:1-4).

5.4.4. The Ministry of Word and Sacrament

To Browne, ordained ministers are messengers, ministers of the Word, who act by canonical speech and catholic direction to keep the community in the covenant. As such, they represent a communicative God as agents of Christ’s Word, gifted by the Holy Spirit, to renew the church’s understanding of their mission in the world. Hence, the character of ordained ministry is defined by its covenental continuity with the apostolic ministry of teaching (see § 5.2.3.). Browne therefore stressed the importance of practical sermonizing over against ministers who tended to use the sermon to fulfill their needs for intellectual satisfaction and ‘image-building’. Browne’s advocacy for practical divinity and application in response to the negligence within the Church of England, finds a most interesting parallel in Hauerwas’s and Vanhoozer’s sorrow about current loss of

\textsuperscript{207} See for example Janssen, Kingdom, Office, and Church, 140-145; and Van de Beek, Lichaam en Geest van Christus, 197.

\textsuperscript{208} See Bakker, “Towards an Evangelical Hermeneutics of Authority,” 34: “Man will never become a piece of God.”

\textsuperscript{209} Cf. “covenants constitutionalize or institutionalize relationships”. Leeman, Political Church, 48.
preaching (§ 4.3.1. and § 4.3.2.). Opposing authors like Stuart Murray and others who have announced the ‘death of the sermon’ (§ 1.4.), they argue that it is exactly the context of post-Christendom that calls for a new appreciation for preaching and ministry as a ‘ministry of the Word’. Hauerwas lucidly understands the ministry of the Word in terms of ‘the task of interpretation’ (§ 4.3.1.). Ministers, through preaching Scripture, invite the community to respond to Christ’s call to seek their identity and purpose within the Scriptural story, so that they might be able to make sense of Christian life in a world where this is not so obvious. The authors of On Being the Church (2008) appropriately use define ordained office in terms of the “ministry of remembering.” The minister reminds the congregation of the story and the teaching of Christ. As such, they function as “community persons.” In this way, preaching forms a central element by which the minister vividly and audibly expresses the church’s covenantal continuity with the apostolic church and the people of Israel (see § 5.2.4.) and equip the church for mission (§ 5.2.3.). Likewise Vanhoozer understands ministers as ‘speech agents’ within God’s theo-dramatic reign, who provide churches with practical understanding of their role and ‘lines’ within the local performance of the gospel (§ 4.4.2.). Ministers thereby represent a communicative God, vehicles of meaning, and instruments of the Holy Spirit to provide the church with understanding of their mission in the world. Sermons are central for the ordained ministry, since they express the public character of ordained ministry, and in a most actual manner, vivify God’s words to his church. Through the sermon, Christ gracefully interacts within his church. Vanhoozer repeats Browne’s emphasis on the ordained ministry as a ‘public’ representation of every Christian’s calling to share the gospel (§ 3.5.2.). His theatrical explanation, moreover, enables us to recover Browne’s interactive understanding of preaching following the Berean example in Acts 17:11: ‘they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so’ (§ 3.5.4.). Preaching is henceforth not a solitary monologue presuming a quiet audience, but a representative act in which the life of the church is put in an encounter with the gospel in order to help the whole church find direction. But here too Word and Spirit go together. As noted above, it is ultimately the persuasion by the Holy Spirit

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211 Cf. “The pastor is expected to profess the faith of the church, to represent the church’s account of what is going on in the world, to bear the burden of the church’s tradition before the congregation, to help contemporary disciples think critically about their faith, to test the church’s current witness by the canon of the saints.” Willimon, Pastor, 19-20.


213 Willimon, Pastor, 18.

214 Cf. Van de Beek, Lichaam en Geest van Christus, 204-205. Van de Beek, however, limits the sacramental ministry of preaching unnecessarily to ordained offices due to his more sacerdotalistic interpretation of ordination (see § 5.4.5.).
(testimonium Spiritus Sancti) that ‘directs’ the church according to the Word preached (see § 5.3.4.). Therefore, the preaching of the Word does not end with the ‘amen’ of the minister but with the missional performance of the church.\footnote{Cf. “Whoever uses this ministry to equip the saints for something different than mission is not ministering the Word of God.” Paas, “Prepared for a missionary ministry in 21st century Europe,” 119.} The ministry of the Word sustains and invites communal improvisation.

Besides Word-ministry, Hauerwas and Vanhoozer also strongly associate the role of ministers with the sacraments of Lord’s Supper and baptism. Ordained ministers are ‘ministers of Word and sacraments’. They thereby correct Browne’s one-sided Protestant emphasis on ‘hearing’ (cf. Rom. 10:14). Though the importance of the sacraments have always played a significant role as verba visibile in Protestant theology and ministry, the opposition toward Roman eucharistic practices required them to prioritize the audible Word-ministry over ceremonial observance. For example, Browne emphasizes the need to have the administration of the Lord’s Supper to be preceded by the preaching of the Word to ensure right practice (§ 3.4.3.). For without a right understanding from Scripture, people would lack a right understanding of the Lord’s Supper which leads to superstition instead of faith. Yet today, observing the highly functionalistic interpretations across the Protestant landscape, there is a greater need to retrieve a more catholic appreciation of ministry, balancing Word and sacraments, attributed to ordained ministry on behalf of the community, as Hauerwas notes (§ 4.4.1.). The prophetic authority of ordained ministry is exercised not by decision-making and people management, but by Word and sacrament through which Christ’s authority is represented, and the church’s identity constituted and build.

An ordained minister is a verbi divini minister who provides intelligible speech by Scripture and sacrament, corresponding to the missions of Word and Spirit. Ordained ministry as Word-ministry is thus a form of leadership that comes specifically by way of faithful interpretation and application of Scripture to the contemporary situation. By retrieving Browne’s language of ‘the ministry of the Word’, with the adding of the sacraments, the ministry is once again reconnected with its pre-given character and stripped of its managerial connotations (viz. ‘jack of all trades,’ Dutch: manusje van alles’). Ministers do not exist to make decisions for the church, nor to do ministry in place of the church, but rather to show what the ministry of the church entails on behalf of Christ amidst the congregation.

5.4.5. Ordination: A Plea for Covenantal Realism
The practice of ordination, an issue which has been at the center of this study, emerges in Browne’s covenantal ecclesiology as a logical consequence of the church’s own covenantal nature. A visible act to signify and articulate the character of the official ministry as the ministry of the Word within the covenanted church. Though it is true that
the actual ordination rite cannot be found in Ephesians, nor under this denominator in the rest of the Bible, we should not conclude on that basis that ordination is therefore unbiblical or irrelevant. Accordingly, Browne understood ordination as a communal act by which a covenanted church receives Christ’s gift of the ministry of the Word into its covenantal bond.\textsuperscript{216} As such, ordination represents a covenantal re-ordering, whereby someone is set apart for the community, as expression of God’s ongoing care for his church.\textsuperscript{217} Ordination does not place somebody outside the community, but assigns this person a new place within the community. The covenantal understanding of ordination is, in this sense, in line with its literal meaning (\textit{ordináre}): ‘to order’ or ‘to assign a place’ within the covenanted community.

Browne’s reluctance regarding ‘laying on of hands’ should prevent us from reducing ordination to its physicality, as for example John Colwell does when confining the effect of ordination within the ritual act (§ 1.4.). Though I appreciate his attempt to retrieve a sense of sacramental understanding to counter functionalistic interpretations, he unnecessarily ends up alienating a minister from the covenantal relations that ground the ministry and the need for accountable discipleship (see § 5.3.3.). Colwell portrays the ordained minister as an extraordinary person whose official ministry has become an \textit{independent} channel of grace apart from the community, which, in my view, essentially creates two spiritual classes of Christians. A position which is unacceptable for the critics we discussed in Chapter 1, McClendon, Spurgeon and Volf. Even Hauerwas, himself an advocate of a sacramental view, refused the \textit{character indelebilis} (§ 4.4.1.). ‘Holiness’ is not attributed only to the clerical category, but to all. For the ‘saints’ make the whole church and not only those given for ministry (Eph. 4:11-12). Colwell’s sacerdotal view of ordination, in which ordained character has become irreversible, reduces the freedom of God as sending authority and the continuing role of the community (see § 5.3.3.). He may deny the church to be a “place for individual autonomy,”\textsuperscript{218} yet his adoption of the indelible character essentially bypasses the need for communal accountability. But rejecting Colwell’s sacerdotalism does not automatically lead to ordinary symbolism as for example Spurgeon assumes (§ 1.6.2.). Another unfortunate ‘reductionism’ which prompted him to distance himself ironically from this practice: ‘why in any case laying on of empty hands?’ Conversely, his own functionalistic idea of ministry seems to be measured by effectiveness and success.


\textsuperscript{217} A similar phrasing of ordination is found in Wight, \textit{Free Church, Free State}, 171: “Ordination involves a re-ordering of relationships in that once ordained to office some members of the church are no longer just members: they serve for the good of the church in particular offices necessary to the church’s well-being and should be accorded the respect due to those offices.”

To avoid either of the two reductionisms, we should differentiate between sacramental and sacerdotal interpretations of ordination, as Stanley Hauerwas suggests. Not in the least since the act of ‘laying on hands’ in itself has no specific meaning, but can be used in diverse circumstances (see for example Jos. 27:23; Deut. 34:9; Acts 13:2-3). It is therefore not the act which carries meaning, but ‘laying on of hands’ receives its particular meaning from the context in which it is applied. ‘Laying on of hands’ can only be ordination when it is conceived of as an communal act, or better, a covenantal ordering of a candidate into the ordained ministry. Thus, laying hands on people will not necessarily imply ‘ordination’, but it well could, when the community intentionally perceives this ritual as an act of reception. Browne’s covenantal understanding of ordination is therefore no less real than sacerdotal ontology. Hauerwas’s own proposal, describing ordination as a sacramental and communal charge to moral character, is a step in the good direction but lacks sufficient substance from a covenantal understanding of the church. To clarify the reality of a covenantal perception of the event of ordination, Kevin Vanhoozer’s concept of covenant, based on Austin’s and Searle’s speech-act theory, is most elucidating (§ 4.2.2.). Although Vanhoozer does not make this connection himself, it enables us to retrieve and appreciate the covenantal speech that accompanies Browne’s description of laying on of hands (viz. prayer, thanksgiving, charge, see § 3.4.4.) not only as a locution referring to the reality of God’s calling to ministry, but also for its illocutionary and perlocutionary force within reality. In ordination, the church recognizes and receives the ordinand as a divine gift, and through ordination the ordinand is ‘ordained’ to the role of verbi divini minister within the community. In this sense, Hauerwas adequately grasps the way we should understand ordained ‘character’: ordination is ‘a charge to that calling’ as Browne emphasizes (§ 3.4.4.). The invocation of the Spirit should therefore not be understood in terms of physical change, but in view of the spiritual maturation to live up to this calling (Eph. 4:13). Hence, by covenantal language ‘laying on of hands’ becomes an act of ordination. It is not that ordination changes the ontological ‘physics’ of the ordinand, but it does change the ontological interrelationships within the church covenant by distinctively

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219 Henk Bakker assumes a similar differentiation between sacramental and sacerdotal interpretations, see his “The Roaring Side of the Ministry: A Turn to Sacramentalism,” PRSt 38, no. 4 (2011): 419.

220 It is remarkable to notice how speech-act theory largely runs parallel with Browne’s Ramist thought differentiating between logic, seen as verbal references to reality (locutions), and rhetoric, as the science of delivery, namely the use of language to address people (illocutions). Bakker also mentions the perlocutionary force of ordination: “The act of ordination could be classified as a ritual of performative communication, and hence has a transactive, perlocutionary function, in which the participant becomes part of the reality which the ritual embodies, reinforced by communal awareness of shared canonical messages.” Bakker, “Towards a Catholic Understanding of Baptist Congregationalism,” 182.

221 The famous text of 1 Tim. 4:14 suggests a similar coherence between speech and rite (διὰ προφητείας μετὰ ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν). See George W. Knight, The Pastoral Epistles (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1992), 208-209; and also William D. Mounce, Pastoral Epistles (WBC, vol. 46; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 70-72, 261-263. Mounce does not regard 1 Tim. 4:14 an example of biblical ordination, but does see the mentioned prophecy as the carrier of meaning.
taking up and binding the ordinand to the congregation and vice versa. Much like a bride, who, after being married to her groom, remains the same on a bodily level, but is changed in her relation to this particular man next to her: she may now call him her husband. ‘Being’ a husband or spouse therefore does not assume any physical change (nothing changed in his or her body), but it cannot be reduced to mere functions either (the marital tasks remain yet to be exercised). The ‘change’ marriage generates is of a covenantal nature: a husband has pledged allegiance to this particular woman and thereby ‘changed’ his social surroundings: his own existence is now bound exclusively to hers, being publicly ‘set apart’ exclusively for her. The matrimonial physics themselves, the visible ‘holding hands’ and the exchange of rings are without significance if not performed in the right context, standing before a wedding officiant, and with the right words, ‘I pronounce you husband and wife’. In a similar way, ordination changes the covenantal existence of an ordinand, placing this person in the order of the public ministry of Word and sacraments on behalf of a specific congregation. A covenant has ‘sacramental’ significance as it constitutes mutual participation in God’s mission. Not in the sense that the human act confers grace upon the singular ordinand—thereby re-creating this individual bodily into a minister—but it is a communal reception of grace through Christ’s gift of ministry by the presence of this particular person, visibly performed in the covenantal act of the laying on of hands. Accordingly, ordination is a covenantal ‘speech act’ and a real sacramental event: it ‘clothes’ the ordained minister in the habit of a covenantal agent as a means of grace amidst the gathered church and charges this person to live a holy and accountable life by the Spirit. Browne similarly described an ordained minister as a means through whom the church shares in ‘the Lordes inheritance’ (§ 3.6.1., Gk. κλήρος, cf. Acts 1:17). As such, ‘clergy’ are a heavenly gift from the ascended Christ and a real ‘means’ by which the whole community shares and participates in Christ’s covenantal presentation of grace. Covenantal participation is therefore a genuine form of ‘heavenly participation’.

‘Covenantal realism’ prevents us from narrowing down the offices of Word ministry to functionalistic interpretations and professionalism. For that which ‘makes’ the minister is not an academic degree or pay check, nor experience, evangelistic success

222 There is some debate between supporters of a sacramental ontology (see for instance Hans Boersma, Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2011], esp. 21-26) and a covenantal ontology (see Michael Horton, Covenant and Salvation: Union with Christ [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007]; also Leeman, Political Church, 40-41). I think both perspectives not necessarily exclude each other (cf. Fiddes, Tracks and Traces, 36-37, 65-82). The act of covenanting, as indicated, is not only referential but also acts upon and within reality. Cf. Kevin Storer, Reading Scripture to Hear God: Kevin Vanhoozer and Henri de Lubac on God’s Use of Scripture in the Economy of Redemption (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2014), esp. 98-102, 151-152.

223 The term κλήρος is in the New Testament used primarily in the sense of ‘lot’, in the sense of ‘casting a lot’ (see Mat:27:35; Mk. 15:24; Luk. 23:34; Acts 1:26). Yet, it generally means, ‘a portion allotted to someone’ (cf. Acts 1:17; Col. 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:3), see Werner Foerster, “κλήρος,” in TDNT, 3:763-764.

224 See for this term Boersma, Heavenly Participation.
or the amount of books someone wrote. The language of professionalism cannot sustain
the ministerial office of the Word. Moreover, covenantal realism bridges the
unnecessary dichotomy between ‘being’ (sacerdotalism) or ‘doing’ (functionalism). If
ordination is regarded as a covenantal act, and thus bound to the covenantal relation
between the local church and the candidate, the questions rises, if the practice of
ordination should be repeated when a minister relocates his ministry to another
congregation? Volf has trouble with the broader implications of local ordination since his
functionalistic appreciation does not allow him to acknowledge any more to the ordained
minister than to any other gifted Christian (§ 1.6.3.). Many others have expressed similar
concerns in the last decades. Colwell’s idea of ‘once ordained, always ordained’, in turn,
has to face the problem of accountability. Whereas a covenantal approach to ordained
ministry does not locate the ministerial status in the candidates ‘being’, or ‘doing’ but in
the church covenant, one is inclined to reply with a firm negative. For once a minister
relocates his ministry to a different congregation, he simultaneously becomes part of
another church covenant, and hence, should be re-ordained. Yet, we have also
acknowledged the catholic implications of the local covenant (see § 5.2.5). Though I do
affirm the need of re-ordination, it is with a different line of argumentation. Especially,
since I do not regard local covenants to be mutually exclusive. For when a candidate is
ordained into the covenant of a local church, he or she is, by this very act incorporated
into the wider covenant of the catholic church. A re-ordination is therefore not to be
regarded as a repetition (‘do over’), but as a re-affirmation and renewal (‘reenactment’),
parallel to our continuing celebration of the Lord’s Supper which never ‘undoes’ the
previous service, but affirms and renews. The role of the church in the ordination process
should not be limited to the rite, as Colwell seems to imply. Hence, an ordained
minister is ‘a way of relating’, a covenantal being, receiving his role from the covenantal
relation of which he’s part.

In conclusion, covenantal realism avoids the fallacy of sacerdotalism and
symbolism which effectively robbed the rite of ordination of its ecclesial significance.
Ordination is properly understood as ‘empty hands’ filled by the gift of Christ. Covenantal
realism is a manner of recognizing the sacramental side to ordained ministry. Not that
the candidate receives the Spirit through ordination, but that the Spirit might sanctify
this person to live according to his ordination.

225 Cf. Leo J. Koffeman, “Confession Versus Professions? Exploring the Role of Ordained Ministers in the
Mission of the Church,” in Bridging the Gap: Connecting Christian Faith and Professional Practice in a Pluralistic Society,
226 See also Wright, Free Church, Free State, 166, 171. Wright also recognizes the local ordination as a
ordination in the wider church, yet without using covenantal language.
227 Colwell, “The Sacramental Nature of Ordination,” 240. Colwell describes the church’s involvement in terms
of ‘testing’ and ‘declaring’ the true calling of the candidate.
5.4.6. Collective Government: Plural Ministry and Synodic Oversight

The recognition of ‘ordered’ ministry for Word and sacraments is never meant as a replacement of in the ministerial involvement of the whole church. Browne, in his day, followed the Genevan example, which entrusted the government of a local church to a board of elders, and to a synod as a wider network of churches for mutual support and consultation (§3.5.3.). From his experience with the episcopal structures, he developed the firm conviction that a collective gathering always precedes and supersedes the singular minister (§3.5.1.). His entire theology of ordained ministry is therefore embedded within circles of mutual support and accountability: the eldership and dual office of pastor and teacher, the joint meetings of ordained ministers and theologians (‘prophesysings’), and synods. In line with the congregational emphasis on community rather than the individual minister, and its call for communitarian structures of authority and governance (§1.4.), a retrieval of Browne’s collective approach to church ministry and government is worthy of consideration. It not only provides a practical way to manifest interdependency, but also concrete structures of accountability.

On a local level, Browne’s distinguished two ‘ordained’ offices: the ‘pastor’ and ‘teacher’. The basics of a dual concept of local ministry are also present in Vanhoozer’s argument. Vanhoozer however, largely follows Calvin’s assessment of the need for a teacher’s office, be it more in the fashion of a non-residential ‘professor of theology’. A dual or plural approach to ordained ministry would first of all be a helpful alternative to the overburdening of the singular minister and make ordained ministers themselves more aware of their limitations (§1.4.). A serious issue Vanhoozer’s proposal cannot entirely escape from either, seeing his rather comprehensive description of the ministerial responsibilities (§4.4.2.). Second, and more important, a plural interpretation of ordained ministry better expresses the rich variation in which Christ provides local churches with care and instruction as promised in Ephesians 4:11. Ministers who are mutual interdependent and complement each other in their efforts. Missiologist Stefan Paas writes correspondingly: ‘For more than one reason the ministry of the Word in today’s missionary Church should be embodied in a team, a fellowship of faithful men and women, with shared responsibilities.” Other scholar writes: “It would therefore be a good start if congregational ecclesiology would retrieve Browne’s dual approach to ordained ministry, recognizing the added value of an ordained ministry exercising their ministry in teamwork.

Since the ordained ministry is, as said, primarily a Word-ministry, Browne never intended this ministry to appropriate the general leadership of the church, nor to manage its disciplinary affairs. This is also the continuous argument of Hauerwas and

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228 See Nauta, Paradoxaal leiderschap, 67.
229 Paas, “Prepared for a missionary ministry in 21st century Europe,” 121; also his “Leadership in Mission,” 118-120.
Vanhuizen in Chapter 4. As such, Ephesians 4:11 is not about governance but about education and spiritual formation. Precisely because of this limitation, Browne recognized other church offices such as elders, deacons and widows, who provide the local church with general oversight, discipline, practical support, prayer and visitations. These ministries are not there just to ‘support’ the ordained ministry, but rather to manifest the collective mission of the church based on the Spirit’s provision of gifts. Precisely on this point, there is a differentiation. A differentiation which—we may now conclude—has nothing to do with hierarchy or spiritual status, but with the specific role the ordained ministry has within the covenanted church. They represent the Word of Christ in sermon and sacrament to sustain the priestly ministry of the whole church.

In our analysis of Ephesians 4:11, we already established that Browne rightly interpreted the listed offices as variant manifestations of the ministry of the Word, exercising the Word-ministry in different fashions relative to different contexts. Even though this text should not be taken as an absolute and comprehensive order of ordained ministry, a retrieval of Browne’s interpretation would be valuable considering the changing context in which the Western church finds itself.230 If it is true that with the rise of Christendom—and its associated passing of missionary consciousness—the offices of apostle and evangelist lost their value,231 post-Christendom might awaken the church’s need for these pioneering offices. It is therefore fascinating to observe Browne’s inclusion of apostles, prophets, and evangelists in his covenantal ecclesiology (§ 3.4.2.). Although we have found but little about how he envisioned these offices to function, it is possible that they were meant to work in association with a synodic gathering. Possibly to serve different local churches and their local ministers, or maybe even as commissioned ‘church planters’ by providing a preaching ministry to places without a church.232 In our context, missionaries and evangelists, and notably the contemporary resurgence of church planters retrieve to some extend this pioneering role of the apostolic and evangelistic offices. These ‘fresh expressions’ of the Word-ministry enable the ecumenical church to recover some of the variety found in early Christianity and notably in Browne’s ecclesiology. Our reading of Ephesians 4 encourages us to develop a more contextual understanding of the ministry of the Word. To differentiate more sensibly between the various shapes and fashions it can be exercised. It is therefore crucial that these more pioneering and less established variants we see today are recognized as true

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232 It is remarkable that in seventeenth and eighteenth-century General Baptists recognized the supra-local office of the ‘Messenger’, who was made responsible for preaching the gospel where it was not known in its purity, and for planting new Baptist communities. See J.F.V. Nicholson, “The Office of ‘Messenger’ amongst British Baptists in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” BQ 17, no. 5 (1958): 207-225.
forms of the same ordained ministry as is the local pastor.\textsuperscript{233} Although these new expressions of the Word-ministry habitually operate at the ‘borders’ of church and society, they need to be more firmly embedded within the heart of the church. Spurgeon’s opposition toward the established ministers with his own ‘school for evangelists’, unnecessarily played off these various manifestations of the same Word-ministry against each other (§ 1.6.2.). It is not unlikely that this tendency strengthened the split between academically trained ministry and missionary ministries. However, missionaries, church planters and evangelists should be understood as ‘ordained ministers’ representing the order of the ministry of the Word in other contexts than an established church. Since these offices may not be naturally embedded in a local congregation, due to their more groundbreaking and cutting edge character, it becomes all the more important that they are embedded by ordination in a larger whole, such as a denomination or a network of churches. Not only since these offices need the support and supervision of existent churches,\textsuperscript{234} but also since existent churches and their ministers need to be reminded of their own mission and vulnerability which is so vividly exemplified by church planters such as Margrietha Reinders (§ 5.3.7.).

At the same time Browne’s recognition of synodal offices may offer a way forward in light of the recent Protestant petitions for a recovery of the bishop’s office, or the office of oversight (Gr. ἐπισκοπή).\textsuperscript{235} Several arguments are made: a bishop would benefit the church’s visible unity, a bishop could act as a driving force for mission and missional awareness, and/or be a ministerial supervisor of lesser experienced local ministers (viz. the pastor pastorum). Though Browne’s literature plainly breathes a deep distrust of hierarchic positions of power—which would become characteristic of congregational ecclesiology in general—he continued to acknowledge the need for synodal oversight, encouragement and correction. That Browne, a founding father of congregational ecclesiology, was open toward synodal oversight, should caution a straightforward identification with local autonomy (viz. ‘every local church for itself’), as mentioned earlier (§ 5.2.2.). Its covenantal nature rather provides theological perspective on how local communities should embody their unity in Christ. Synods are tangible expressions of the covenantal unity provided by the Spirit and practical means for local

\textsuperscript{233} In a recent document of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands this trend is also announced: “De predikant anno 2025 mag zich geroepen weten in een post-christelijke cultuur, in een missionaire situatie, zijn of haar gaven in te zetten. Meer dan voorheen zal naast de herder en de leraar (die van belang blijven) het beeld van de apostel boven komen drijven die geroepen is het evangelie te verkondigen, midden in deze wereld.” Kerk 2015: Waar een Woord is, is een weg (Utrecht: Protestantse Kerk in Nederland, 2015), 25. Contra Van de Beek, Lichaam en Geest van Christus, 200-201.

\textsuperscript{234} Cf. Ed Stetzer, Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age (Nashville: B&H Publishers, 2003), 92-94. Stetzer here mentions the need for supervision and mentorship.

\textsuperscript{235} See for example Van der Borgh, Theology of Ministry, 432-433; Van de Beek, Lichaam en Geest van Christus, 246-254; and Paas, “Leadership in Mission,” 117, 120. Baptist theologian John Colwell even proposes a return to the papacy, see his Promise and Presence, 229-231.
churches to benefit from the covenantal catholicity of the broader gathering of multiple churches seeking mutual betterment. In this way, synods are nothing but another means of ‘watch-care’, to use McClendon’s terminology.236 More recently, Baptist theologian Nigel Wright made an appropriate appeal for this beneficial role of synods, stating their value as places of joint doctrinal reflection upon the times, common prayer, and discerning of the mind of Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 15:28).237 It is a way for ordained ministers to provide their entrusted churches with Vanhoozer’s idea of ‘catholic direction’ (§ 4.2.2.). Besides the aforementioned pioneering ordained ministries, synods have their own order of ordained ministries. For example: an office of pastoral oversight (pastor pastorum) to provide pastoral guidance (such as aiding particular churches in need), mediate in conflict situations, and supervise novice ministers. But additionally, certainly in today’s context of rapid cultural changes in which churches are reconfiguring their identity, there is much need for a prophetic office of theological oversight and vision.238 It would be worthwhile to retrieve the much heralded ‘further light principle’ in this regard.239 A Word-ministry which arguably does not exclude the role of (professional) theologians and theological training—as often the case within charismatic circles—that could provide theological improvisation to a broad network of churches. The need for theological improvisation, prominently present in the proposals of Hauerwas and Vanhoozer, requires much to sustain the church in its mission (§ 4.2.1. en § 4.3.2.). An ecclesial theologian, ordained as a synodal minister, can provide churches with a theological understanding of their times (Zeitgeist), be responsible for further theological education for local ministers, and offer theological advise to the synod. Congregational ecclesiology would benefitted greatly when it more emphatically seeks to appreciate the work of theology as a true manifestation of the ministry of the Word. Though the ordained ministries of the pastor pastorum and the theologian may resemble the role of a ‘episcopal’ bishop, they do not stand in a hierarchic position toward the synod, nor is it a singular position. Synodal ministries are ordained by the synod, are accountable toward the synod, and therefore cannot minister from a position of power, but only with the same vulnerable character that should characterize local ministers.240

238 “The ministry of the prophet is not about new revelation but about application of the revelation of the ways of God in Christ to changing times and unforeseen circumstance. Those who are gifted for this are to be prized in every generation as the Word is made newly relevant.” Wright, Free Church, Free State, 167.
239 See Freeman, Contesting Catholicity, 273-309.
240 Cf. Henk Bakker, “De bisschop is van beneden, niet van boven,” NTKR 5 (2011); esp. 61-65. Bakker discusses the possibility of a Baptist bishop and concludes that such an office may only be possible if ‘from below’, requiring the recognition of multiple local churches and humble character.
While this study did not intend to develop a theology of ministerial oversight as such, it does hold that a congregational theology of ordained ministry needs to be embedded within a collective government representing wider circles of ‘watch-care’: eldership, non-ordained offices, and even synods with pioneering offices and offices of oversight.

5.4.7. A Thicker Theology of Ministry
The third and last criterion that guides our retrieval of Browne’s theology in order to develop outlines for a constructive proposal is interdependency. By this we mean that—for a theology of ordained ministry to be appropriate—it should act in accordance with the recognition of the charismatic giftedness of the whole membership of a local community. To meet this criterion we need a thicker theology of ministry. A theology of ministry that incorporates more consciously the variety in ecclesial ministries: ordained and non-ordained, local and supra-local, and pastoral and educational in character. For this study this specifically means a concept of ordained ministry which is more emphatically embedded within the wider circles of ministry within the church. First of all, ministry should not only be viewed from a pneumatological approach (charismata), but also from Christology (the gift of ordained ministers). A theology of ordained ministry should be deeply rooted within the mission of the Word, in interactive cooperation with the mission of the Spirit, who distributes every Christian with his gifts. When portraying ordained ministry as a ‘ministry of Word and sacrament’ it also becomes clear why ordained ministry is not the same as leadership. For ministry is a kind of leadership that is exercised not by decision-making and control, but by the administration of Word and sacrament. Only then it becomes intelligible why churches require a distinct ministry distinguished by ordination. This Word-ministry is pre-given by Christ. He sends his messengers to provide the church with the ‘crucial acts’. The significance of ordination, henceforth, should not merely be derived from the ritual itself—the laying on of hands—but from its covenantal significance. Through ordination the church acts by receiving Christ’s gracious gift to sustain his covenanted church. Finally, I have argued for the need to be more sensitive to the different contexts in which

241 The ethnographical idea of ‘thick descriptions’, originally suggested by Gilbert Ryle, took off with Clifford Geertz’s The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays (New York: Basic Books, 1973), esp. 3-30. Thick descriptions, in contrast with ‘thin descriptions’, not only put into words what is actually observed (the mere ‘physics’ of an event itself), but also to denote its specific ‘meaning’ (from its coherence with its environment and background). Consequently, thick descriptions aim to avoid a reductionist view of human behavior and culture and seek a contextual understanding by taking in account the social established structures of meaning to be intelligible to the outsider. Today, Geertz’s methodology has become an important field of studies in relation to ecclesiological research as well, see for example Pete Ward, “Introduction,” in Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography, ed. Pete Ward (Studies in Ecclesiology and Ethnography, vol. 1; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2012), 7; cf. Holmes, “Knowing Together the Mind of Christ,” esp. 174-177.
ministries, including the ordained ministries, are performed. Ministry is never ‘cast in concrete’, but seeks continuity in new contexts.

Particularly in our post-Christendom context and its associated loss of self-evident meaning, it becomes all the more important to use ‘thick descriptions’. A thick description of ministry from a covenantal perspective offers a viable and adequate road of theological understanding, correcting non-theological language of functionalism and professionalism without lapsing into sacerdotalism. Ordained ministers not only ‘do stuff’, but by their crucial acts—Word and sacrament—invite the community of faith to participate in God’s mission in the world. This study aimed to do just that. The person whose life and ministry are a vivid testimony of the importance of a ‘thicker concept of ministry’ is Lesslie Newbigin.

**THE STORY OF LESSLIE NEWBIGIN**

Lesslie Newbigin (1909-1998) was raised within a Presbyterian home and attended a Quaker boarding school before receiving his education at Cambridge University.\(^{242}\) It was during his time at Cambridge that Newbigin devoted his life to Christ and eventually received a calling to ordination: “While I was praying something happened. . . . I knew that I had been ordered.”\(^{243}\) In 1936 he was ordained as minister within the Church of Scotland and left Britain to work as missionary in India.\(^{244}\) His approach to mission changed the ways in which the British Empire had conducted the expansion of Christendom so far. Newbigin didn’t want to teach the people how to be good subjects of the British crown, but to follow Jesus as Lord within their own culture.\(^{245}\) Instead of the power structure of European superiority controlling mission, Newbigin focused on the unity of local communities and mission: the training and appointment of local and collegiate leadership and the ministry of “preaching the Gospel, ministering the sacraments, and building up the Body of Christ.”\(^{246}\) It is within the context of

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\(^{243}\) Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda*, 15.

\(^{244}\) See Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda*, 35.

\(^{245}\) See Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda*, 39. Already upon arriving in India, Newbigin reports his dismay about the hierarchic distance between foreign missionaries and the population, which in his view also frustrated mission itself: “It was clear that the fundamental problem was the unwillingness of missionaries to entrust full responsibility to the Indian leaders whom they had trained.”

mission Newbigin is able to reunite the various dissenting churches (Congregationalists, Methodists and Presbyterians) with the Church of England, becoming the Church of South India (CSI). They even consented upon a joint theology of ordained ministry. Within this new united church the ‘dissenter’ Newbigin becomes a bishop, at an early age of 37. Yet, even while being a bishop, he always considered ministerial order secondary to the local community.247 Hence, instead of governing his diocese from his distant ‘see’ in Madurai, he travelled extensively to visit all the 550 congregations entrusted to his care ‘Indian style’—meaning by foot or bicycle, well aware that the church is first and foremost local.

As I reflect upon them I am sure that they illustrated and, in a measure, justified the claim that the office of bishop could truly be seen as a focus of unity for divided Christians. . . . The challenge was to help each of them to be a living sign and foretaste of the Kingdom. That is how I understood the job of a bishop. That was why I believed these long journeys to be of the first priority. They would help to make union a reality and help to establish the fact that a bishop is not first an administrator but first a minister of word and, sacrament and pastoral care.248

Newbigin’s influence on the newly formed CSI and its episcopacy specifically retrieved the text of Ephesians 4:11 to stipulate that the bishopric just represented another form of the same ministry of Word and sacraments as the local minister, an actual pastor pastorum, appointed by God and his church to serve the broader community in conjunction with a synod.249 After spending the majority of his adult life on the mission field in India, and some years working for the World Council of Churches (1959-1965), he returned to England in 1974 only to discover that his own country had become a mission field itself. In Birmingham, the ‘retired’ Newbigin volunteered as pastor to prevent a dying congregation in the slums of the city from being closed down. Not coincidentally a congregation within the United Reformed Church, in which Presbyterian and

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248 Newbigin, Unfinished Agenda, 97, 99.

249 Newbigin actually preached from this text to explain his duty as newly installed Bishop of Madras in 1965, see his Unfinished Agenda, 203. See further Hans Kronenburg, Episcopus Oecumenicus: Bouwstenen voor een theologie van het bishopsambt in een verenigde reformatorische kerk (IIMO Research Publications, no. 62; Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2003), esp. 285-288, 363-372, 382-385, 408-419. Kronenberg explicitly explains the more bounded interpretation of episcopacy within the CSI to the work and influence of Newbigin, which is viewed as a gift from the ascended Christ (Eph. 4:11) in the service of all.
Congregational churches had reunited. Newbigin approached his new post as a missionary pioneer and began to study the secular context reading through philosophy, epistemology, history and science. There, in Birmingham, he continued to teach what it meant that the church itself was essentially missional, since the triune God himself is a missional God (*missio Dei*); it is the Father who sends Son and Spirit, who send the church.\(^{250}\) One of his initiatives is a plea for the institution of a well-trained auxiliary ministry, non-stipendiary ministers of Word and sacrament, to support the local churches.\(^{251}\) In 1992 Newbigin moved from Birmingham to London in order to be closer to his family. During this time he became acquainted with Holy Trinity Brompton, hotspot of the Charismatic movement within the Church of England.\(^{252}\) In the remaining years of his life—he died on 30 January 1998—he visited the church on numerous occasions and gave many lectures. His last and most important work, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* of 1989, brings together the entirety of his life’s lessons: The Lordship of Christ, the need for mission, the local church as hermeneutic of the gospel, and the need for ordained ministers who trained local churches in mission. In the end, Newbigin contemplated, “[a]ll truly pastoral ministry in the Church has as an essential part of its content the training of others to be ministers of Christ in the world. The test of our ministry will be the extent to which our people become ministers.”\(^{253}\)

The life of Lesslie Newbigin brings many aspects of this study together. Not only will his name stand as one of the greatest missiological minds and writers of the twentieth century, his own life story embodies the changes within ecclesiological reflection in Western-Europe. Being both ‘dissenters’ and educated at Cambridge, Newbigin is in many ways a fascinating ‘counterpart’ to Robert Browne: the latter the arch-Separatist, the former a committed ecumenist committed to church unity. Browne was a staunch opponent of the episcopal system, whereas Newbigin became a bishop himself. Besides these differences—which to a large degree witness the changes within the Western context—Newbigin, like Browne, centered the ministry of the ordained around the proclamation of the message of the gospel and opposed suppressing forms of ecclesial leadership. He too emphasized the locality of the church as the place of Christ’s visible reign, and embraced the giftedness of the whole community. Both men decidedly opposed the politics of ‘old Christendom’ in which

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250 See most elaborately Goheen, *“As The Father Has Sent Me, I Am Sending You*”, 115-164.
251 See Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda*, 232.
253 Quoted in Wainwright, *Lesslie Newbigin*, 143.
dominant power was considered as an ally. In this, Newbigin was indeed a ‘scandalous prophet’ as he has been described. Yet, this did not imply a disavowal of the ordered ministry. He never considered a distinct ministry by ordination superfluous or discriminatory, or problematic for the church’s mission, on the contrary. Furthermore, his own ministry, both in India and England, testifies the vulnerability we called for. An authority not exercised by control, but by accountable discipleship and sharing one’s life as a gift, that strengthens local churches in mission. Above all, Newbigin’s work shows us a direction to retrieve a thicker view of ministry in which both the Christological and pneumatological ‘go hand in hand’ to shape the church according to God’s missionary purposes.

5.5. Conclusions

In this chapter we retrieved the Robert Browne’s covenantal theology of ordained ministry for the contemporary Western church by formulating three constructive outlines: ordained ministry as a distinctive order of ministry, a vulnerable understanding of authority, and a thicker concept of ministry. Together these ‘directions’ answer the main question of this study.

First, a call for ‘order’ in which the distinctive role of ordained ministry within the communal priesthood is recognized. Ministers are covenantal gifts of the ascended Christ in continuation with God’s care for Israel and the apostolic church as part of God’s redemptive mission (missio Dei). They are visible and tangible expressions of the Christocratic reign, manifesting the church’s catholicity. The order of ordained ministry is not there to substitute the priesthood of the church, but rather to sustain the priestly mission of the whole church in the world as is acted out by Frits the Drifter.

Second, a vulnerable exercise of authority that embraces accountability to exercise authority. As representative of Christ’s authority, a minister seeks to strengthen the unity of the church by drawing on the very sources that define their common identity in Christ. Ministers thus act authoritatively in prophetic fashion, which is not based on force or spiritual superiority, but on the communal allegiance to Christ as Lord. It is a kind of authority that necessitates accountable witness by intelligible speech and practical discipleship which display the message of Scripture in connection with the catholic tradition. Amsterdam’s pioneering minister, Margrietha Reinders, is a vivid testimony of this call.

And third, a thicker concept of ministry in which the pre-given ordained ministry as Word-ministry is received together with the ministry of the whole church in

order to be a priestly people in the world. A thicker concept that recognizes both ‘hands of God’: Christ and Spirit. As such, the gift of ordained ministry coincides with the spiritual gifts given to the entire community. Ordained ministry is therefore always embedded in wider circles of collective government and ministries, sensitive to the contextual challenges. Hence, the need for a ‘thicker’ theology of ministry. The life of ‘dissenter’ missiologist Lesslie Newbigin not only testifies of this thicker view of ministry, as part of the church as hermeneutic of the gospel, but also of this entire study.
AFTERWORD ‘THE STRIPPING OF THE MINISTRY’

This study aimed to establish the significance of ordained ministry for congregational ecclesiology today, especially in the Western context in which the church has lost its institutional role in civil society. In the previous chapters I have tried to develop a theology of ordained ministry that is both rooted in the Free Church tradition, while also taking into account contemporary challenges and points of controversy that determine today’s debate in the broader ecumenical church. In these closing words I want to offer a personal account of the main contribution this study seeks, which is to make and pinpoint some of the ways in which its outcome may become concrete for Baptist ecclesiastical polity and liturgy.

My main concern has been the problematic and ambivalent theology of ordained ministry within congregational ecclesiology. Certainly, with the downfall of Christendom and the loss of the self-evident structures of Western Christianity, we have witnessed a gradual ‘stripping of the ministry’ that has left the pastor ‘naked’. That is not to say that there haven’t been any attempts to put some clothes on the minister. For example, the habit of professionalism that perceives a minister as a religious expert, as an ecclesial manager, or as CEO, who either runs the church like a business or as a social club that provides religious services. Or some wear the charismatic mantle, that celebrates the successful pastor who is able to draw the multitudes, owing to his or her winning personality, with the almost inevitable consequence that the minister’s name becomes ‘larger’ than the community of witness which he or she serves. Or yet others, whose egalitarian and functionalistic gray cloak that refuses any ministerial distinctions based on the giftedness of an equal sameness: “equal monks, equal headcaps” (Dutch: gelijke monniken, gelijke kappen). Thus, anyone may, and can, preach the Word or administer the sacraments, even if devoid of any kind of theological training, education and knowledge. But even in such ‘flat’ and ‘equal standing’ churches it shows in actual practice that— although all members are equal—some eventually appear to be more equal than others. To turn the egalitarian tides, the last decades have witnessed ‘a sacramental turn’ that seeks protection in priestly garments. Not only does this hamper the nature of congregational ecclesiology, it also simply negates the challenges of post-Christendom.

These ministerial costumes are not imaginary. In my own ministry, I have frequently felt the temptation to try them on. It is so much easier to become the strong leader—the ‘unwrinkled reverend’—that some people expect you to be just that. The proverbial pedestal is time and again awaiting to be mounted by someone to tell people how to live their lives, so that you can become the minister to which people can look up to. At other times I pulled back and—for ‘the sake of peace’—refrained from doing what is right (Phil. 1:10) by taking an unpopular position. The fear of losing people, or of being
less liked, or of being regarded as a ‘nagging devout, is not something you can easily shake off. After all, these people are the once who ensure that there is bread on my table. Should a minister not simply comply to those who have hired him? Additionally, there is the constant attraction of playing the trump card of theological superiority. Because really, what do people actually know of ‘the things eternal’? Did I not spend all these years at university? The ‘belief’ in my own abilities, however, was contradicted by the need for people’s compliments. Not to mention the effect of ‘one critique’ in response to a sermon that sometimes ruined my Sundays.

What this study proposes is, firstly, not a return to an untouchable sacerdotal priesthood reminiscent of the powers of Christendom, nor to accommodate to our consumerist society and dress up the minister as the church’s religious organizer or manager. Rather, I have come to recognize that the stripping of the ministry of post-Christendom offers a chance to restore the pastoral ministry to the ministerial order of prophetic vulnerability. Hence, the ordained office is not something to keep the minister safe, but to remind both the ordained minister and the congregation of the particular role he or she has within the covenanted gathering. This means first of all that a minister is ‘under orders’. Not first so ordered by the people who enable her or him to pay his bills, but by Christ who sends these messengers to help the whole membership to minister the gospel in the world. Only ministers who are convinced that their work is of a different order, and thus are representing a different Lord, can learn to say ‘no’ to the social temptations of nationalism (‘we have to protect our Christian nation’), to liberalism (‘I’m here to help you to control your own life’ and ‘everything you do is fine as long as it feels good’), or to consumerism (‘let me entertain you’ and ‘God is there to fulfill all your needs’). But also ‘no’ to the personal lures of the ‘messiah complex’ (‘I’m irreplaceable,’ ‘people need me’), or self-deprecating doubt (‘I’m a failure’). For the ministerial order reminds ministers above all that the ministry is not about themselves, but about being a gift to others (Eph. 4:11).

Secondly, this study lays bare that this ministry is not exercised by enforced authority and irrefutable doctrinal regulation, but by vulnerable authority. This is a form of authority that depends on accountable discipleship and theological competency to explain and embody what it means to have Christ as ultimate authority. By implication, a minister’s authority is not dependent on his moral impeccability, but on the faithfulness to the message of the gospel. If the minister needs to ‘suit up’, it should be with the prophetic robe. Prophets speak with an authority that depends on their Sender without support of any majority, nor for the likings of others, nor of financial gain. For ordination is not a ‘license to tell’ just anything, but a covenantal mandate to convey the particular message of the gospel, the message that makes the church ‘church’. Prophets speak not because of their moral superiority—they are ‘men and women of unclean lips who dwell amidst people of unclean lips’ (Isa. 6:5). It is hard to be an ordained minister to which
people cannot look up to, or to refuse to build your authority on charismatic personality or academic standing. For in a way, the vulnerability of the ordinary can be repulsive. As the story of Mark reminds us, it was Jesus’ hometown of Nazareth that could not believe his message due to his common appearance. It even evoked Jesus’s famous comment: “A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household” (Mk. 6:4). Yet, vulnerable prophets are specifically needed in times of preparation for and amidst a Babylonian captivity. If the Western church faces diaspora, it needs prophets who remind them of their true identity and their vocation, and this within a culture and environment where other stories make policy. Prophets whose very lives testify to, and embody, the faith of the church catholic, and who are competent to enable a particular community to transcend the particularities of their context and locate themselves in the grand narrative of God’s redemptive actions. ‘Itinerant prophets’, or ‘guest preachers’ as they are often called, cannot fulfill this duty, as they are not sufficiently acquainted with the contextual questions. Our times, therefore, require a retrieval of the local prophethood. First as a ministry of the church itself, and by implication also to characterize the role of the ordained ministry. Certainly in a contemporary society in which power is watched with suspicion, ministers must consciously cloth themselves with the prophetic robe, disavowing the power of success and achievement, to embrace that truth that comes in weakness.

And thirdly, this study proposes to prevent the ordained ministry from becoming the ‘all’ of church ministry, or becoming a self-enclosed entity within the community of saints. An ordained minister should rather be ‘in the thick’ of the community. For it is the community that receives the ordained minister as a gift, and entrusts her or him with the ministry of Word and sacrament through ordination. Ordination is not some extravagant or superfluous ceremony, but it is a vivid testimony to the can be burdened nature of the church as a covenantal gathering who shares in Christ’s inheritance. It offers a tremendous opportunity to audibly remind both ordinand and congregation of their mutual covenantal duties. Ordination therefore needs to be accompanied by explicit covenantal language (‘I/we commit myself/ourselves to…’). For ordination is not a carte blanche, but a particular and specific charge, that comes with covenantal responsibilities. Ministers are not employees who can be asked for any job the congregation wants to get done. Since Christ is the actual Sender, an ordained minister’s task is limited to his commission. This prevents the minister from becoming as overburdened as the family’s fridge on which everyone puts his messages. The commission determines the minister to her or his duty: teaching the church how to improvise the gospel truths in today’s society. This is mainly accomplished by preaching the message of the Bible, baptizing initiates, inviting people to partake of the Lord’s Supper, teaching the Christian faith, discussing questions, talking on a personal level about spiritual matters, listening to people with doubts, challenging others to reflect on
issues in society, and challenge the stories of society with the gospel narrative. I would therefore recommend to distance the ordained ministry from any kind of decisional power, be it in the council of elders, or during church meetings, so ministers can indeed be prophets who lead by vulnerable witness, instead as kings who rule by enforcement. While there is only one ordained ministry of Word and sacrament, the variety in which this ministry can be exercised varies respective to its context. We would do well, therefore, to lose the idea of the one minister per congregation. Not only since this might not be financially sustainable on long-term, but also since no single person can be everything to all, and thus needs others. Plural ordained ministry can be a visible manifestation of interdependency. Ordained ministry can be teamwork. In my personal experience, I have missed the companionship and complementary capabilities of others. Churches should therefore stop advertising job vacancies that essentially portray a 'super pastor'. Someone who can combine pastoral sensitiveness and excellent preaching, evangelistic creativity with good organizing abilities, and liturgical innovation with the social skills to engage in youth work. Not only is it questionable whether all these task indeed belong to pre-given role of the ordained ministry, but also we should ask ourselves: would a plural ordained ministry—with ministers with diverse talents and skills—not better represent Christ’s care?

A further reason why I think this study has shown how ordination can strengthen congregational churches, is its catholic significance. The rite of ordination reflects the catholic practice of the church across time and place to receive people as gifts of Christ, who are thereby charged with Word and sacrament to sustain their mission locally. The ordination-ceremony itself—the laying on of hands in the midst of the local gathering—would therefore provide an excellent moment to confirm and manifest the covenantal relations with other neighboring congregations and the broader denomination or association, by inviting their representatives as a testimony to the church’s catholicity. While ordination should happen within the local church, this does not mean that the broader church should not be involved. During my own ordination a diverse group of people laid their hands upon me, displaying the interconnectedness of this local church as well as the broader recognition of my vocation.

Finally, I like to address the beneficial role of synods. I am well aware of the oddity of this recommendation within the context of the Free Church tradition. Nonetheless, this study has made clear that a recognition of ecclesial authority beyond the local community is not so foreign to congregational ecclesiology as is often thought it would be. Whereas further explorations are necessary to clarify the ‘how’ of integrating congregational ecclesiology with synodical oversight, it would offer a possibility not only to better express the catholicity of the church, but also provide the local church, and its ordained ministry with: accountability structures, a broader community of learning, of encouragement, discernment and the finances to support new church plants, academic
schooling and research, diaconal support, etc. For a local church is wholly church, but not the whole church. Certainly in our post-Christian context, we become increasingly aware of the missionary importance of cooperation and visible unity.

The argument I made in this study is—as outlined—to a large extent based on the work of others. I have tried to learn from them and tried to find ways to shape my own Evangelical and Baptist upbringing in dialogue with other traditions. First through an extensive survey of the literature of a pioneering author of the Free Church tradition, then also consciously with present-day authors who have helped me to rethink what it means to be ordained in the face of the challenges of post-Christendom. Ordained ministry is crucial if churches seek to witness the gospel in the secular Western context. The three witnesses I have called to the stand—resistance minister Frits the Drifter, Amsterdam pioneer Margrietha Reinders, and missiologist Lesslie Newbigin—all testify how the mission of the church is sustained through the distinctive ministry of the ordained. For if Christian identity is no longer put forward by the social structures of a Christian society, we are compelled to once again rely on the gifts Christ has ordered to sustain the church in its mission. To fulfill this ministry, the church is in dire need of prophetic ministers who are convinced that they are send by Christ to live a life of vulnerability, who devote themselves to be theologically competent to serve their local community with meaningful understanding of the Scriptural narrative, so that we might jointly show what it means to live with Christ as Lord—against the often apparent opposite.


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Within Baptist churches and the wider Free Church tradition there is considerable controversy concerning the recognition of a distinct ‘ordained’ ministry. Often a ministry ‘set apart’ by ordination is considered to be in tension with the general priesthood of all believers. Are not all baptized believers ‘a priest’? Why then should there be a special ministry set aside by the ritual of laying on of hands? At the same time, due to the changes in Western society, the role of the ministerial authority itself has become more and more problematic. Several theologians, among whom notably Stanley Hauerwas and Kevin Vanhoozer, therefore speak of a ‘ministerial crisis’. This study seeks to engage the Free Church controversy regarding ordained ministry as well as today’s broader ministerial crisis, by returning to the roots of congregational ecclesiology, specifically in the writings of the late sixteenth-century author Robert Browne (c. 1550-1633). Hence, the question that drives this study: How can Robert Browne’s Separatist ecclesiology contribute to a constructive theology of ordained ministry for contemporary congregational ecclesiology? The particular combination of historical theology and systematic theology qualifies this project as a theology of retrieval, a theological method in which a premodern author is appreciated as a fruitful theological conversation partner for today.

The rest of Chapter 1 is dedicated to a further examination, first of the historical and systematic challenges, secondly of the state of research into the ecclesiology of Robert Browne is presented, and thirdly of criteria that enable a fruitful assessment of Browne’s contribution for the contemporary church: 1. Historically, congregationalism itself, and Robert Browne in particular, are surrounded by strong associations of democracy, ecclesial autonomy, and anticlericalism that often make ecumenical debate and mutual understanding unnecessarily difficult. Systematically, contemporary ecclesiology is faced with major shifts in Western society (post-Christian, post-Christendom, postmodernity) that have their bearing on church and ministry, and therefore demand evaluation; such as the consumerist ethos of society, the loss of self-evident authority, a rise of secular notions of profession and leadership. 2. The survey summary of Browne-research, shows a remarkable ambivalence; first concerning his ecclesiological position within the sixteenth-century debates; and second, concerning the interpretation of the distribution of ministerial authority within his covenantal approach to the church. 3. To formulate a constructive proposal three criteria are established that represent the congregational concern, based on three widely heard objections against the recognition of a distinct ministry set apart by ordination—viz. the problem with a clergy-laity divide, the problem with outward ritualism, and the problem of ministerial exclusivity. Three eminent Free Church theologians, James McClendon, Charles Spurgeon, and Miroslav Volf, are consulted for this purpose. Our analysis of their protest resulted in the following criteria, that henceforth guide this study: communal priesthood, permanent accountability and
interdependence. To answer our leading question, this study faces a dual object that subsequently gives this study its twofold structure. In Part 1 a reconsideration of Browne’s literature in the context of the ecclesiological debates in Elizabethan England. And, in Part 2, a retrieval of Browne’s covenantal ecclesiology within the contemporary situation.

Part 1 presents in Chapter 2 a historical-theological analysis of some major influences at Cambridge University during the English Reformation, that shaped the intellectual atmosphere in which Browne developed his ecclesiological convictions. Browne’s own biography is the starting point for discussing these developments. This chapter reveals a close relationship between the young Browne and the events at Cambridge University in the 1570’s, particularly the rise of the Presbyterian Puritans under leadership of Thomas Cartwright, and the famous preacher and spiritual counselor Richard Greenham, in whose household seminary Browne participated. Our contextual furthermore shows that the biblical reorientation at Cambridge century, formed a seedbed for a more critical stance toward the state governed Church of England, in favor of a more local-orientated ecclesiology (‘turn to the local church’). Especially in the Elizabethan era, Cambridge University became the center of nonconformity and source of a more thoroughgoing reformation, especially inspired by Genevan Presbyterian ecclesiology. The Presbyterian agenda essentially implied an abolishment of the episcopal structure of the Church of England, and was therefore considered subversive to English society. Ringleaders such as Cartwright, and later John Field and Thomas Wilcox, produced the nonconformist climate in which Browne attended the university city and was stimulated to rethink the state of the English church. Though Richard Greenham—for a period of time Browne’s mentor—may have been at the more moderate side of Puritanism, he nonetheless implemented the crown jewels of Presbyterian ecclesiology in his parish church in Dry Drayton: a strong preaching ministry supported by, and embedded within, a local congregation, appointed by an interplay of congregational election and elderly ordination. Nonetheless, at the end of the day, these ‘hasty Protestants’, as the Presbyterian Puritans can be dubbed, always sought to work out their Presbyterian convictions within the limited space of the English church.

In Chapter 3, Browne’s literature is analyzed chronologically within the context of Cambridge Puritanism as portrayed in the previous chapter. Except for his eventual break with the Church of England, it shows that Browne’s principal arguments were to a large degree consistent with those advocated by the Presbyterian movement. Though Browne obviously stretched the implications, he too argued for the abolition of ministerial hierarchy, a preaching ministry for every parish, ordination by congregational election, local governance by lay eldership, and the cooperative relationship between church and state in a godly society. Browne’s Separatist ‘twist’ to the Presbyterian agenda obviously revealed the uncontrolled elements within Genevan
ecclesiology. In line with the traditional Reformed interpretation of Ephesians 4:11, Browne tried to work out a theology of ordained ministry that sought to keep the middle between the sacerdotal priesthood and anticlerical evaporation, by formulating a theology of ordained ministry in terms of the church’s constitutive covenant with God. In this way, ordained ministry emerges as a visible expression of God’s covenantal care to his people. By framing ordained ministry within the church covenant, Browne is able to uphold the shared authority and responsibility in church’s life and discipline, while also recognizing the distinct distribution of ministerial authority in the form of God’s messengers. Obvious associations between congregational ecclesiology and democracy, lay control, and anticlericalism, are shown to be quite exaggerated and even erroneous. Browne’s own theological development was the covenantal framing of the Presbyterian ‘turn to the local church’, which depicts ministerial ordination in terms of Christ’s sending and congregational reception. This ‘twofold’ understanding of the church covenant exists out of the divine promise and provision of salvation through Jesus Christ and a secondary human act of obedience to share a common life under the Lordship of Christ. ‘Reception’, additionally, emphasizes that a congregation never creates its own ministers but receives them as a covenantal gift along the lines of Christ’s distribution in Ephesians 4:7-11. To Browne, the character of ordained ministry, therefore, is predetermined or ‘pre-given’ by Christ. Ordination, it follows, signifies a covenantal re-ordering of the covenantal relations: it is through ordination that the congregation ‘receives’ someone to serve in the capacity of the public ministry of preaching and the administration of the sacraments. Understanding ordination as a ‘covenantal event’ thus provides a middle way between sacerdotal clericalism and functionalistic professionalism. Taking Ephesians 4:11 as his basis for true ministry, he substitutes the singular officer with the binary ministries of pastor and teacher. They ‘govern’ his church above all by Word and sacrament, supported by elders who are responsible for practical affairs. Finally, it is discovered that Browne’s ‘congregationalism’ did not exclude the possibility of synodical oversight. He never advocated local autonomy nor propagated independency, but conceded to the higher authority of a gathering of many covenanted churches together.

In Part 2 Robert Browne’s covenantal approach to ecclesiology and ordained ministry is brought in conversation with contemporary debate. Chapter 4, therefore, presents an evaluation of the current controversy of ordained ministry by looking at two prominent theologians who have both extensively dealt with the crisis of ministry, namely Stanley Hauerwas and Kevin Vanhoozer. The three criteria, formulated in Chapter 1, are used as ‘lenses’ to see how the post-Christian situation changed the particular obstacles surrounding ordained ministry: the problem of a distinctive ministry, the suspicion toward authority, and the fear of clericalism. Besides some clear differences pertaining the relationship between Scripture and the church and the
evaluation of sacramental theology, Hauerwas and Vanhoozer jointly depict the post-Christian turn in Western society—including its ‘stripping of the ministry’—as a positive development which enables the church to redefine the ordained ministry in service of the priestly mission of the church. They both refer to Ephesians 4:11 to denote the Christological nature of this distinctive ministry characterized by ordination. Several other theological notions, such as catholicity and missio Dei, also come into play here. With regard to the contemporary distrust of institutional authorities, they direct us to a more communitarian appropriation of authority in which ministerial authority is not exercised by obvious superiority but by vulnerable accountability and theological competence. Remarkable in both propositions is also the image of the prophet to explain this vulnerable form of authority. With regard to the ordination-rite and its instant association with clerical sanctity, Hauerwas and Vanhoozer go their separate ways. Hauerwas connects a sacramental view with moral expectations, while Vanhoozer takes a functional approach, which leaves room for ministerial exemplarity including also failure and the need for reconciliation.

Then, in Chapter 5, the results of all previous chapters come together in a constructive proposal of a theology of ordained ministry for contemporary congregational ecclesiology. To this end, a retrieval of Browne’s covenantal theology of ordained ministry is presented, in close consultation with the text of Ephesians 4:11, and the directions offered by Hauerwas and Vanhoozer. This results in three guidelines, mirroring the ecclesiological concern behind our criteria, which together articulate a constructive theology of ordained ministry: ordained ministry as an particular ‘order’ of ministry, vulnerable authority, and a thicker concept of ministry.

First, a call for ‘order’ that recognizes the distinctive role of ordained ministry within the communal priesthood. Ministers are covenantal gifts of the ascended Christ in continuation with God’s care for Israel and the apostolic church, as part of God’s redemptive mission (missio Dei). They are visible and tangible expressions of the Christocratic reign, manifesting the church’s catholicity. The order of ordained ministry is not there to substitute the priesthood of the church, but rather to sustain the priestly mission of the whole church. The story of ‘resistance-minister’ Frits the Drifter is a living testimony thereof.

Second, an outline for a vulnerable authority is provided. A kind of authority that embraces accountability to be authoritative. As representative of Christ’s authority, a minister seeks to strengthen the unity of the church by drawing on the very sources that define their common identity in Christ. Ministers thus act in a prophetic fashion; an exercise of authority which is not based on force or spiritual superiority, but on the covenantal allegiance to Christ as Lord. Vulnerable authority necessitates accountable witness by intelligible speech and practical discipleship displaying the message of
Scripture in connection with the catholic tradition. The ministry of Amsterdam’s pioneering church planter, Margrietha Reinders, is an example of this guideline.

And third, a thicker concept of ministry is described in which the pre-given ordained ministry as Word-ministry is received together with the ministry of the whole church in order to be a priestly people in the world. A thicker concept of ministry recognizes both ‘hands of God’, Christ and Spirit, and reconciles the gift of ordained ministry with the spiritual gifts (charismata) given to the entire community. It shows that ordained ministry always needs wider circles of collective government and ministries, sensitive to the contextual challenges. Hence, the need for a ‘thicker’ theology of ministry. The life of ‘dissenter’ missiologist Lesslie Newbigin testifies the importance of this thicker view of ministry.