

**BISMARCK AND THE FOUR GOSPELS
1870 - 1914**

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by

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The theory that Mark's Gospel was published before Matthew's is widely held in German and English speaking countries.

This article shows how this theory, with little supporting evidence, came to be spread as part of Bismarck's anti-Catholic 'Kulturkampf' policy.



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[] Refers to the Endnotes.

STATE *INTERESSE* AND MARCAN PRIMACY 1870-1914

Social philosopher Rosenstock-Huessy visualized the Gospels serving the church as the lips of Jesus. Relying on this image we can see that in order for these fundamental documents of Christian faith to function as they should in the church, it is necessary for them to be properly disposed one to the other. Rosenstock-Huessy was well enough acquainted with German academic history to know that something happened during the nineteenth century that had served to distort the twentieth century voice of Jesus. He recognized that an influential "assured result" of nineteenth century German Protestant gospel criticism, namely the primacy of the gospel of Mark, had in fact never been established, and that this revolutionary reversal of the relationships between the gospels had far reaching canonical consequences. This placed Rosenstock-Huessy fundamentally at odds with the established world of theological scholarship, since it was inconceivable to most of his colleagues that German New Testament scholarship could be mistaken on such a fundamental point, i.e. the assumption of Marcan primacy.

The theory of Marcan primacy has led to the academic practice of interpreting the text of the gospel of Matthew, the foundational gospel of the Christian church, in the light of Matthew's presumed changes in the text of Mark. The twist of Jesus' lips that followed from this paradigm shift diminished the Jewish content and character of his message. Christian interest in the book of Isaiah (in which book Rosenstock-Huessy could see the whole of Christian faith prefigured), was discounted as due to a subsequent preoccupation of the apostles, rather than as a decisive beginning point for understanding Jesus' own reading of the law and the prophets.

I

In 1977 Rosenstock-Huessy's recognition that Marcan primacy was never established in the nineteenth century received dramatic confirmation in a book published by Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht: *Geschichte and Kritik der Markus Hypothese* by Hans-Herbert Stoldt [1].

In 1987 the late professor Bo Reicke of Basel university published his study of Synoptic Theories Advanced During the Consolidation of Germany, 1830-1870, in which he traced the history of the idea of Marcan primacy from Strauss to Holtzmann. In passing; Reicke noted that the appointment in 1874 of Holtzmann to the prestigious chair of New Testament at the reconstituted university of Strasbourg gave this young scholar's career (and thus the Marcan hypothesis) an important boost [2].

Stoldt had analyzed Holtzmann's influential work published in 1863 in his 1977 work, and had demonstrated its critical untenability. This had been done independently as early as 1866 by Hajo Meijboom eight full years before Holtzmann's appointment to the chair at Strasbourg [3]. Thus it is an unsolved question in the social history of biblical studies how and why this important appointment was made [4].

This leads us to focus on the decade in which this happened — 1870-1880 — the era of the *Kulturkampf*, in order to see whether it is possible to discover how and why what was still only a very popular "scientific" hypothesis in 1870 was eventually transformed into what B. Reicke designates as a theologumenon. It should be said in advance that this bit of social history cannot settle the vexing question of whether Mark was or was not the earliest gospel. That question can only be settled on the basis of historical and literary evidence. This bit of social history can, however, help explain what might be called the sociology of Marcan primacy.

By *Kulturkampf* is meant that conflict which dominated relations between Germany and the Vatican during the decade of the eighteen seventies. This conflict arose soon after the close of the first Vatican Council and pitted the iron chancellor prince Otto von Bismarck against Pius IX. The issue was an age old question of church and state. Constantine had simply announced to bishops of the church that he had received a revelation from God that he was to exercise the office of bishop on all matters outside the church, just as they were to exercise jurisdiction on all matters internal to the life of the church. Therefore, it has always been tempting for the head of any government in Christendom to presuppose the right of a Christian ruler to exercise sovereignty over Christian subjects. Kaiser Wilhelm was no exception and Bismarck was his appointed minister. Pius IX, on the other hand, was the inheritor of a tradition according to which, as the head of the Roman Catholic church, he was responsible for every Roman Catholic, including those who were German citizens.

At issue was whether Catholics in Germany in a showdown were to obey the pope or the Iron Chancellor. From the pope's point of view it was a matter of whether these Catholics were going to obey man or God, he being God's appointed representative by way of Christ who had been sent by God. Christ in turn had sent Peter whose infallible successor he (Pius IX) was. From Bismarck's point of view it was more a matter of whether these German citizens were to be subject to the laws promulgated by elected representatives of the German nation, he guiding the legislative process by means of influence over a Protestant majority within the dominant Prussian parliament.

The conflict broke out when Dr. Wollmann, a Catholic instructor of religion in the gymnasium at Braunsberg in East Prussia, having refused to signify his assent to the Vatican decrees of 1870 on the supremacy and infallibility of the pope, was excommunicated and deprived of his right of giving instruction in the Catholic faith [5]. It helps to know that although Dr. Wollmann was giving instruction to Catholics, he in fact, in accordance with a long-standing arrangement, had been appointed by government officials, and his salary was paid by the state. Ordinarily this arrangement worked well, since such appointments were made in consultation with church authorities. The state in turn took for granted that no local bishop would dismiss a government appointee without due cause.

And here we come to the crux of the matter. What in this situation caused a breakdown in a system that for so long had worked well in maintaining a viable relationship between Prussia and its Catholic minority?

At issue was the way the Vatican Council decrees of the preceding year were to be implemented, not only in Germany where Bismarck could control the situation through his influence within its dominant state, Prussia, but in France and Austria, whose governments were vulnerable to pressure from ultramontane forces within their Catholic majorities. It was among the ultramontane elements in French and Austrian society, with their reaction against liberalizing tendencies arising out of the enlightenment embodied in some of the forces behind Bismarck, that the Jesuits had found support for their plans to persuade the pope to call the Vatican Council. The aim had been to strengthen the papacy by issuing decrees on universal papal jurisdiction and papal infallibility. A strengthened papacy was perceived by these Europeans as offering the best hope for maintaining an effective defense against a rising and ruinous tide of rationalism and social unrest.

Meanwhile, in response to Wollmann's excommunication, the Prussian minister sent a rescript to bishop Kremenz, who had excommunicated Wollmann, demanding that Catholic students should continue to receive religious instruction from Wollmann. The bishop protested. The state responded by issuing an ordinance stating that "in the eyes of the state, the excommunicated teacher remained a member of the Catholic Church" [6]. The Prussian bishops, rallying around their fellow bishop, collectively sent an "immediate" remonstrance to the emperor against "the interference of the state in the church's internal sphere of faith and right" [7]. In response to this incipient episcopal rebellion, the German sovereign communicated to Pius IX that "the Prussian government had acted in strict accordance with the existing law" as hitherto approved by the pope [8]. A high ranking official issued a declaration that "the state was under no obligation to treat the adherents of the unchanged Catholic church as seceders from it".

This paved the way for state recognition of property rights and legal status for that portion of the Catholic clergy which refused to assent to the Vatican decrees and organized itself accordingly (i.e. Old Catholics).

In August, the *Provinzial-Correspondenz*, the organ through which the government was in the habit of elucidating its views for the benefit of the public, explained that no bishop could be allowed to force teachers subject to state control to give their assent to a dogma imperiling the relations between the state and the church of Rome [9].

If we ask: "How could the dogma of papal infallibility imperil the relations between Germany and the church of Rome?", the answer is clear. Germany was a nation in which Protestant principles were dominant. This dogma seemed to Protestants to be anti-Protestant to the core! The decrees had been promulgated by the pope in St. Peter's on July 18, 1870. One month later, the *Allgemeine Augsburger Zeitung* delivered this judgment:

The monstrosity has taken place. The paramount party in the church (i.e. the Roman Catholic church) has committed the crime of declaring to be a heresy the oldest principle of the Catholic faith that revealed truth is made known only by the continuous consent of all churches, and, on the other hand, has declared as a dogma by the mouth of the unhappy Pius IX the crazy opinion of mere human origin that the pope by himself is infallible. It has ventured to threaten with excommunication from the church all those who may decline to agree to this overbearing outrage. It was not a formally valid resolution of the council which delivered this verdict. It was merely a *remnant* of the Vatican gathering which [1] on account of the scornful contempt dealt out by the court and that faction to the independent members, [2] on account of its departure from all rules of ecumenical councils in order to thwart free deliberation, (and) [3] on account of official calumny of the minority, had long forfeited the reputation of an ecumenical council, or in truth had never won it. This *remnant* of a sickly corporate body has attempted to turn the church upside down by the overthrow of its constitution, and Pius IX has lent himself to confirm this criminal undertaking [10].

From 1830 onwards the unification of Germany had required a *modus vivendi* between Protestants and Catholics. In response to this ideological need of German society for change and accommodation, German liberalism had carefully worked its will within both communions. Lillian Wallace in her work entitled *The Papacy and European Diplomacy, 1869-1878* [11] writes that in the period before the Vatican decrees were issued:

The leading German churchmen had been building up a powerful Catholic party which (1) aimed at harmony with the world of science, (2) resented Jesuit influence over the pope, and (3) strongly opposed further centralization of power in Papal hands [12].

Wallace goes on to note that "the ambitions of this group were clearly grasped and set forth" by the papal nuncio in Munich, who wrote to cardinal Caterini as follows:

Almost all of these people pride themselves on forming what they call the great party of German savants. Their aspirations consist in general of encouraging and pursuing to their furthest limits scientific progress, and that with liberty, complete independence, maintaining dogma intact but sacrificing certain doctrines which are associated with it and have not been defined by the church; their aspirations also consist of laying aside old-fashioned methods of scholasticism, these antiquities of the Middle Ages, as they call them, which are incompatible with modern progress; most important, their aspirations consist of rendering the scientific research of Catholicism as similar as possible to the scientific research of Protestantism, in order to demonstrate the superiority of Catholic theology over Protestant theology; finally, their aspirations include giving to biblical, philological and historical studies a very large place, leaving only a very small place for true and positive theology. This party is dominated by pride. It resents the rein of authority which according to its views hinders progress. It takes little account of the decisions of the Roman congregations; it esteems highly the university system of "learned" Germany and prefers it to the seminaries of foreign lands; it regards with an eye of pity, if not scorn, the degree of scientific culture possessed by other countries, and considers theological science in the seminaries of Italy, France, and other nations as in a state of infancy; thus it is explained, also, why this party never seems favorable to the founding of scientific institutions depending on the authority of the bishops, and prefers subordination to the civil government, in order to preserve a greater liberality in institution [13].

It should be noted that this liberal Catholic party aspired to render the scientific research of Catholicism as similar as possible to the scientific research of Protestantism. This clearly included biblical and historical studies, as these studies were carried out within the German universities. The fact that Germany's state controlled universities were financially dependent upon the civil government and subject to its influence appeared to these Catholics to pose no threat. If we take this ecclesiastical letter and subject it to sociological analysis we find that it affords striking confirmation of the view that these liberal Catholics were profoundly implicated in facilitating the subsequent assimilation of the German Catholic intelligentsia within a predominantly Protestant regime. To be sure, in order for this assimilation to take place there needed to be a compatible Protestant majority equally willing to abide by the *modus vivendi* which would emerge out of this kind of cultural and intellectual accommodation.

Before we explain the sociological function of German liberalism in greater detail, let this one point be underscored: it is the German university system and more precisely German science or *Deutsche Wissenschaft* that is to provide the magisterium (i.e. the decisive final court of appeal) in the ideological struggle for the salvation of the German nation.

II

It should be self evident to any student of literature that the ideological needs of society inevitably affect the way literature of that society is interpreted. However, in the established world of biblical scholarship this influence of ideological needs of society upon literary interpretation is not always recognized. To be quite specific, there is today a reluctance to recognize the way in which the ideological needs of nineteenth century German society have influenced the way in which the Bible in our theological schools and our universities was and continues to be interpreted. The reasons for this reluctance require exploration.

We may begin by asking: "What were some of the ideological needs of nineteenth century German society that have affected literary interpretation of the Bible?" There was, for example, the need to be up-to-date in relation to science. In order for biblical faith to be credible it was necessary for it to be defended on scientific grounds. In the nineteenth century, one science that provided some ruling models was biology. Since life appeared to develop from simpler forms into ever more complicated forms, it became credible to think of literary forms as developing from the simple to the complex. Thus, for the Old Testament, relatively early J and E were united in various combinations with more developed D and P to make up the even more complex texts of the books of the Pentateuch.

For the New Testament, the more simple Mark and "Q" were combined to make up the more developed gospels, Matthew and Luke. Parables of Jesus like that of the leaven in the loaf and that of the mustard seed were cited as evidence that Jesus was ahead of his time in thinking in scientific terms, i.e., in the terms of growth. In fact these parables became known as the "parables of growth".

This approach to the Bible resulted in the attempt to distinguish earlier from later levels of the tradition. This made possible chronological rearrangements of the fragmented parts of the Bible which could then be reworked into "scientific" histories of Israel on the one hand and "scientific" histories of the early church on the other. In this way the grand, richly diverse, yet unified story of the Bible, from creation in the book of Genesis to the eminent coming of a new heaven and the new earth in the book of Revelation, was fragmented. This is not only true for the Bible as a whole, but also for individual books. We can test how this has affected the interpretation of a particular book by considering the gospel of Matthew. We find a story in this gospel which, following the canonical model of the Servant in Isaiah 53, begins with the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem of Judea and runs continuously to his death in Jerusalem and his resurrection appearances in Judea and Galilee. It is all narratively connected in the form of a well developed story.

But by the end of the nineteenth century this gospel had been hopelessly broken up and dissected into an incomprehensible set of separate sources. Some parts came from a source called "Q"; other parts came from Mark or a source overlapping with "Q" called "Ur-Markus"; still other parts came from other putative sources. As a consequence the canonical character of this book is destroyed.

Every commentary or book about Matthew written out of a commitment to this nineteenth century model (which by now has assumed an anti-canonical function) borders on being unintelligible. Try as they will, scholars are unable to discover any convincing authorial purpose out of a study of these separate parts, when arranged according to what on this model is believed to be earlier and what is believed to be later. This is no less true for redaction critics than it was for the earlier form and source critics. The gospel which remains foundational for the Christian church has become, at the hands of all who rely on this German critical tradition, largely incomprehensible. As a consequence. Matthew, for many Christians, and for most eurocentric theologians, has lost a great deal of its authority and much of its literary value.

For our purposes, however, it is the political side of the ideological question that is of paramount importance. For example, Bismarck managed to exclude Roman Catholic Austria from the ever expanding Prussian state. This means that the Second Reich in reality became a Protestant dominated empire led by a Protestant Kaiser. However, while nineteenth century Germany was predominantly Protestant we must never forget that it contained a very significant Catholic minority. At the same time, while it was also predominantly Christian it contained a relatively small but very influential Jewish minority. Among the important ideological needs of nineteenth century Germany was not only a *modus vivendi* between a Protestant majority and a Catholic minority, but also between a Christian majority and a Jewish minority. Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, following the Enlightenment, were, by 1870, all recognized as citizens of the Second Reich. These culturally diverse German citizens had to accommodate their inherited differences and work together if the German Empire was to fulfill its ascending role in world politics. Nineteenth century biblical criticism served German society well in enabling it to meet these pressing ideological needs. The state supported universities facilitated the inevitable process of intellectual accommodation, and/or assimilation. From a post-Holocaust vantage point it is shocking to see how far Jews were willing to go in facilitating the possibilities for a German Jew to become a "better" German. Not only were the dietary laws given up, some synagogues were willing to move their main worship services to Sunday. Enlightenment biblical criticism which became state supported biblical scholarship smoothed the way for this accommodation.

On the majority side, sacrifices made by Christians were less radical. However, all passages in scripture which had fed Christian anti-Semitism throughout the middle-ages needed to be discounted. This meant not only that the terrible words in Matthew "let his blood be upon our heads", needed to be relativized; so also did the stinging condemnations of the Pharisees in Matthew 23. This was effectively achieved by denying the foundational role of Matthew in the constitution of the church, and by turning this foundational role over to earlier hypothetical sources which were sanitized as much as possible from anti-Jewish polemic. The two chief results of this nineteenth century deconstructive process were Proto-Mark and the logia source later called "Q". The breaking up of the text of Matthew into many parts with the earliest and most reliable coming from Mark and "Q", and the later and less certain (which tended to include material that was troublesome) coming from the church or from the hand of the Evangelist, made it possible for liberal theologians to pick and choose what made the most sense to them as they composed "historical reconstructions" of Jesus serviceable for the time. Ideally Jesus was a Jewish rabbi of the liberal school of Hillel. But he could also be a Jewish prophet. Both liberal Jews and liberal Christians could experience relief and joy over this socially and nationally unifying achievement made possible by German *Wissenschaft*.

However, it was just this gentle liberal Jewish teacher or eschatological prophet that proved inadequate as a basis for theology for disillusioned, post-World War I, liberal Christians in Germany when they ultimately were expected to make sense out of the devastating defeat of their imperial armies. The defeated German people needed a theology with a redemptive doctrine of sin. In Germany, this led to a rejection of the "historical" Jesus and a turning to a Pauline dominated dialectical theology, and, in the United States, eventually to Pauline dominated neo-orthodoxy. An appropriate canonical role for the gospels, however, still eludes liberals, some of whom today toy with the idea of canonizing "Q" and the gospel of Thomas.

State initiated pressure on German Catholics to accommodate and/or assimilate to the Protestant majority was at first successfully resisted by the Vatican. But eventually, through the state supported universities of Germany, aided by British and American universities which followed the lead of German scholarship, German *Wissenschaft* triumphed over church tradition, over "revelation", over the "oracular". Sociologically speaking, within Germany, the critical tradition that developed in and was fostered by these state universities was one that went a long way toward serving the ideological need for Catholics, Protestants, and Jews to accommodate their differences, in the interests of a unified and purposeful Germany.

The societies of every country which faced essentially these same ideological needs readily embraced this liberal Protestant German criticism. These included England, Scotland, Holland, Scandinavia, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. The most talented and aspiring young biblical scholars from these countries flocked to the German universities.

But societies in which these particular ideological needs did not exist turned a deaf ear to this critical tradition. These included those of Ireland, Austria, Hungary, Greece, France, Italy, Ethiopia, Spain, Portugal and all Latin American countries. The presence of students from these societies in the lecture halls of the theological faculties of the universities of Berlin, Gottingen, Marburg, Tubingen, and Strasbourg, was negligible.

III

With this survey of the sociological aspects of our topic in view, let us return to the struggles between Bismarck and Pius IX. Each of these titans lived out of and represented his own world of discourse. That of Pius IX was Catholic. That of Bismarck was Protestant. At issue is the figure of the apostle Peter, and how the pope is to be understood in relationship to Peter. We must bear in mind that the protagonists from these two worlds of discourse are playing out their roles on a stage of history where both sides have committed themselves to a certain measure of religious toleration. Blood must not be shed over this issue. There must not even be torture, and certainly no capital punishment — there can only be arrests, trials, banishments or imprisonments. It is against this background of religious tolerance that measures taken by Bismarck to break down Catholic resistance appear so shocking. By 1876 every Prussian bishop was in prison or had left the country [14]. It is estimated that at the height of the controversy, as many as 989 Prussian parishes were without priests.

But how and when were these persecutory measures first initiated? As early as May of 1871, Bismarck had told the Prussian legislators that

... the Prussian cabinet is determined to take measures which shall henceforth render it impossible for Prussians who are priests of the Roman Catholic church to assert with impunity that they will be guided by canon rather than by Prussian law [Bishop Kremenz of Ermeland had so expressed himself] ... We shall maintain the legislative power of the state against all comers [15].

The next month Bismarck told a government official that he "proposed to move vigorously against the clericals ..." Wallace conjectures that this decision which contemporaries said came so quickly it seemed like an inspiration, and could be fixed almost to the day and hour, was possibly the result of a report from Rome that: "the papacy was assuming an anti-German attitude" [16].

Three days later an article appeared in the *Neue Preussische Zeitung* which declared that the Jesuits, who had exhausted every resource to prevent the unification of Germany, were responsible for the formation of the Center party (i.e. the Catholic party).

Although the Papal See, it went on, had at first greeted the establishment of the German empire with approbation, Rome's action had belied its word. The government of Germany would never consent "to strengthen a party whose sole aim was to resurrect the powers of the papacy...". This article, in Wallace's view, was the clarion call to arms in the *Kulturkampf* [17]. This was June 22, 1871.

Two days later the periodical *Germania* carried an article in which science and religion were juxtaposed as hopelessly at odds and concluded that an "ultramontane, that is a Catholic, cannot love his German fatherland; he is a stranger in his own house" [18]. Clearly such a person's influence in society, in the press, and in politics was to be curtailed. The conflict escalated and according to one count made early in 1875, 136 editors had been arrested, 20 confiscations of newspapers had been executed, 210 center Catholic party members had been arrested, 74 house searches had been executed, with 55 dissolutions of meetings and organizations, and 103 expulsions and internments [19].

The question of what to do about the Jesuits was brought up in the German Reichstag. On May 14, 1872, a bill was introduced calling for their expulsion from Germany. Speeches were heated and the supporters of the bill proved in the end to be unstoppable. One evening in the theater, following a day of debate, songs were performed about the Jesuits, the pope, and infallibility [20]. This theatrical reference to Infallibility makes it clear that the decrees of 1870 were certainly an issue in the minds of those who wanted to expel the Jesuits.

One month later, after word about the results of the debates in the German Reichstag had reached the pope, he had the opportunity to address the German reading club in Rome. While he could agree that God wants citizens to obey and respect magistrates, God also wants them to speak the truth and fight error.

"We find ourselves under [a] persecution [that has been] prepared for a long time, but [is] now making itself felt. It is the minister of a powerful government who after great success on the battlefield [victories over Austria and France] has placed himself at the head of this persecution. I have let him know (it is not a secret, the whole world may know) that triumph without moderation cannot last, that a triumph which combats truth and the church is the greatest madness. Who knows if soon a little stone may be detached from the height to break the foot of the colossus? ... If God wills that other persecutions follow, the church is not afraid. On the contrary! In the persecution it will be purified, strengthened and surrounded with new beauty ". [21].

The pope's remarks evoked a predictable reaction. Bismarck was understandably displeased. Everyone seemed to realize that the reference to "the stone and the colossus" was to the German empire and particularly to Bismarck himself. The Jesuits were banned and the *Kulturkampf* was now well underway [22]. This was the summer of 1872.

The following January, the first repressive laws were introduced into the Prussian legislature [23]. They can be summarized as follows:

Priestly offices could only be confirmed on candidates of German birth who, after passing the school-leaving examination, had studied theology for three years in a German university, and had received a sound scientific training tested by the state. Certain exceptions notwithstanding, this rule was manifestly aimed at theological seminaries on whose behalf an outcry at once arose. Still more contentious ... was the subjection of the appointment of candidates duly trained to the veto of the state ... Appointments made without the approval of the state were null and void; and the making of such appointments or the leaving open of clerical offices beyond the period of a year, was to be punishable by fines. Heavy fines were also to be imposed on priests illegally appointed [even if they should only) exercise spiritual functions - a provision which had the effect of depriving a parish served by such a priest of the ordinary comforts of religion [24].

These laws were passed by the lower legislative body 245 to 110. After long debate and finally a speech by Bismarck alleging that it was "the conviction of the king and the government that the foundation of the state is in danger", this legislation passed in the upper house on May 1st by 87 to 53. Thereafter these laws came to be known as the May Laws because it was in that month they came into effect. The Catholic bishops in response at once prepared for resistance, informing the government eleven days later that they were "unable to cooperate in carrying out these enactments" [25].

Six months later Pius IX issued an encyclical in which he lamented certain things, including the May Laws which were causing Prussian Catholics so much suffering. He nonetheless advised courage and reminded everyone that the church would be triumphant in the end. "Heaven and earth may pass away, but my words will not pass away". The pope said that the words Jesus referred to were: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church". Those who oppose the church, history teaches us, have been defeated in the end, while the church itself "gleams brighter than the sun" [26]. Here we see one of these two protagonists publicly calling attention to what Yale historian Jaroslav Pelikan has designated as "the charter of Roman Catholic Christianity", that is the passage in the gospel of Matthew where Christ bestows on Peter the keys of the kingdom (Matt 16,18-19), which passage undergirds papal claims of universal jurisdiction and infallibility [27]. It will only be a matter of time before the other protagonist (Bismarck) will publicly level his counter charge to this papal appeal to holy writ.

Meanwhile, on the surface, these papal lamentations seem to have had no effect on developments in Germany. What reaction may have been going on behind the scenes historians can only conjecture. In any case, the bishops were made to take an oath to keep the state's laws conscientiously, unconditionally and without reservations. Catholic legislators both in the Prussian and Imperial parliaments opposed these measures at every step and spat out their defiance at the iron chancellor and his government. On occasion they reduced their tormentors to silence. Their chief spokesperson stood up in the Prussian parliament and said:

You have power to torment us, to wound our hearts. You do not have the power to take our faith away from us. When you shall have closed *all our* churches we shall assemble in the forests, we shall imitate the Catholics of France during the [reign of] Terror [28].

Bismarck's campaign against the Catholic church reached its highest point in 1874 with passage of the law on the "internment or expulsion of recalcitrant priests". With all Catholic bishops in Prussia either in prison or in exile, with hundreds of priests incarcerated, and several hundred parishes priestless, the pope on February 5, 1875, issued another encyclical in which he cried out against the May Laws and again lamented their damage to the church. Because the church no longer had control of the education of its priests and thus, for example could not be sure that its "charter" would be left intact, the pope could hold that this anti-Catholic legislation overturned the constitution of the church and cut the ground from beneath the authority of the bishops. Catholic bishops who, because of their resistance to this oppressive legislation, were shut up in prison, he held up as martyrs.

For it is not to the powers of this earth that the Lord has submitted the bishops of his church, but to Peter to whom he has entrusted his sheep and his lambs. That is why no temporal power ... has the right to despoil of their episcopal dignity those who have been named by the Holy Spirit to administer the church ... It is necessary to obey God rather than man [29].

It follows that Bismarck is not contending with a mere human being but with the prince of the apostles who by faith is perceived by Catholics to be authoritatively present in the person and office of the pope. It was this unending resistance of the Catholic bishops, urged on and supported by the ultramontane (read: "Petrine") forces of other Catholic countries, that tormented Bismarck beyond endurance [30]. This encyclical of the pope evoked a response in a government newspaper:

The fact of this open outspoken message leaves no doubt that the relations of the papal see to secular government have been fundamentally altered through the newest development [i.e. the appeal to scripture to justify resistance to the ultimate authority of the May laws].

The pope's message, the writer maintained, was a revolutionary confrontation of the state's authority which by virtue of its unmistakable purpose indicates the course the government must follow in combating it; the Catholic church must be made to learn who is sovereign in Prussia [31].

As far as Bismarck was concerned there could be no question about the decisive role in all this of both the Vatican Council decree on papal infallibility and of its basic ideological corollaries, Petrine primacy and papal supremacy. Only two months after the pope had last called public attention to his Petrine authority, on April 15, 1875, while the *Kulturkampf* was still at its height, Bismarck leveled a bitter counter attack against Pius IX. The [Catholic] church, he said, is now nothing else but the pope. Before the Vatican Council, German bishops exercised the right to at least think for themselves independently from what the pope held. However, since the Vatican Council, they no longer, complained Bismarck, exercised this independence of the pope. And now, going for the jugular vein [figuratively speaking] of his opponent, Bismarck juxtaposes Peter to the pope saying that Pius IX was not really Peter's successor since the apostle Peter had not been infallible; Peter had sinned, wept bitterly, and repented; Bismarck closed his attack with a touch of irony: "From the pope, I think, we need not expect that" [32].

This skillful use of biblical exegesis strongly suggests, if it does not prove, that Bismarck and his advisors understood the role of Peter in the ongoing political struggle. It is clear that they would have understood the way in which state *Interesse* would be served by a university endorsed counter argument. Of course this counter argument could not be effective unless it was supported in most if not all influential universities of the realm. This certainly included the university of Berlin and universities like the newly reconstituted, university of Strasbourg. Essential to this development would be a professorate that was sensitive (but not openly subservient) to the interests of the state, and a government that knew how to work with local university officials [33]. Marcan primacy clearly offered support for discounting the claims for a papal authority which rested on the Peter passage in Matthew absent in Mark. To have well placed professors in the universities whose publications supported Marcan primacy would clearly serve the interests of the state. Conversely, any professor whose published work proceeded from the traditional position that the gospel of Matthew is our earliest gospel, would be out of step with the interests of the state, and could expect, under the new Reich, to wither on the vine. This is exactly what happened to the distinguished Hilgenfeld, whose negative review of Holtzmann's book did little to damage the growing support for the Marcan hypothesis. Protestant pastors caught up in the spirit of the times simply ceased to recommend to young theologians that they go to hear Hilgenfeld. It was deemed not necessary to take his views into account.

And now we approach the point of our essay.

Marcan primacy, as B. Reicke has noted, became a German *theologumenon* [theological opinion]. It eventually was taught to children in the schools without question. How did this happen? In 1870, the Marcan hypothesis was no more than an increasingly popular *wissenschaftliche Hypothese* [experimental method]. But certainly by 1914, probably by 1890, and possibly as early as 1880 this popular hypothesis implicitly converted into a German Protestant dogma. Why? I wish to suggest that in the cultural struggle between church and state the ideas of Marcan primacy and the existence of "Q" took on ideational and ideological roles. That is, they began to function canonically within the new university dominated Protestant magisterium. In proposing this I wish to allow for the probability if not the certainty that this function of the "Two-source" hypothesis [The theory that Matthew and Luke were based on Mark and 'Q'] was largely if not wholly unconscious. In any case, it cannot be denied that these university endorsed ideas served to undercut the canonical basis for the decrees of Vatican Council I.

Moreover, in sociological terms the theological achievements of Marcan primacy and the existence of "Q", correlate positively in results to the political achievements of the May Laws. In both cases the results achieved were anti-ultramontane (read: "anti-Petrine"), and were reached through state institutions under government influence. In both cases, parameters were set within which the Catholic minority was to find a viable place in the body politic of the Second Reich.

The immediate reaction of the Catholic hierarchy was one of resistance to political aggression from the dominant Protestant majority. The symbolic center of resistance within Germany was the tomb of saint Boniface, the English Benedictine missionary who is venerated as "The apostle to Germany". Catholic bishops assemble near this tomb in Fulda in times of peril and whenever they meet on matters of importance for all German Catholics. Bismarck, however, in time found a way around this resistance by going over the heads of German Catholics and negotiating with the new pope an end to the *Kulturkampf* [Cultural-religious struggle]. The new pope wanted to normalize relationships between Germany and the Vatican. This eventually freed German Catholic liberals — who, in the first instance, in the face of state persecution, had joined forces with conservative Catholics — to resume their program of cultural assimilation through university sponsored German *Wissenschaft* [systematic research and teaching]. This in turn eventually paved the way for German Catholic scholars to recommend Marcan primacy and the existence of "Q" even in the face of the Vatican sponsored Biblical Commission's responsum of 1912, which at that time was still negative to this theory.

During the *Kulturkampf* the German universities were more unified in support of Bismarck's goals than was the Prussian legislature. There had been open opposition in the legislature to the May Laws. No such concerted opposition to Protestant shibboleths developed in the universities.

We must bear in mind that all professors at German universities, Catholics as well as Protestants, were appointed by the state. After 1875, for a brief period, any German scholar who would openly question the Marcan hypothesis, in however small a measure, would be perceived as endangering "the foundation of the state". They would have endangered the foundation of the state by denying it a decisive defensive weapon against Vatican inspired aggression manifest in the use the Jesuits and the pope were making of the Peter passage, a Matthean passage notably absent in Mark!

This intensely conflictive situation lasted only two or three short years. When Pius IX died, his successor wanted to make peace, and upon learning this, Bismarck, as previously noted, went over the heads of German Catholic leaders and worked out a concordat with the Vatican directly, ending the *Kulturkampf* on terms favorable to a Protestant dominated German state. Persecution of Catholics in Germany abated, but by this time the die had been cast. The gospel of Matthew was henceforth to be identified with ultra-montanism. Matthean priority to Mark could hardly be advocated by a Protestant as a scientific solution without raising the suspicion that the scholar concerned was either "pro-Catholic" or "unpatriotic", or at least out of step with the rapidly growing scholarly consensus required by the church's theologians. In this situation a critical mass of scholarly opinion certainly did form in favor of Marcan primacy. But why? All careful histories show that this happened in the absence of convincing historical and literary evidence, and, indeed, in the face of compelling counter evidence. Therefore, the conclusion that other interests were exercising an influence is unavoidable. What some of these "other interests" were is discussed in the histories of Meijboom and Stoldt. To these may now be added state *Interesse* [State Interest]. While the conflict between Bismarck and the Vatican eventually subsided, anti-ultramontane feelings in Germany persisted, and remained strong throughout the life of the Second Reich.

The charge of "Ultramontanism" can be translated into the charge of being "subject to the Vatican". A basis for this charge lasted on after Bismarck had made peace with Leo XIII, and even after he was dismissed by the Kaiser in 1890. The source of continuing anti-Catholic feeling could be either theological or political.

And popular sympathy generally was a good deal estranged by the anti-modernist campaign, which by emphasizing the supremacy of dogma over "free enquiry" seemed an especial affront to the work of the German universities.... The temperature of German

nationalism was rising, and the violently anti-Catholic propaganda of the evangelical *Bund* served to fan the flames. It seemed increasingly intolerable that Germany's "manifest mission in the world" should be restrained by a party (the Catholic Center party) in the Reichstag which was supposedly "subject to the Vatican" [34].

It may be argued that no German scholar would have allowed himself to be influenced by non-scientific considerations, like the fear of being regarded as one who wishes to limit "free enquiry". But is such an argument sociologically tenable? And in any case would these German scholars also be free from all national sentiment?

For example, would Catholic professors during the Second Reich be immune from societal pressure emanating from a majority prejudice that a Catholic "cannot love his Fatherland"? It is within this historical and sociological context that we are most likely to find the answer to the question: "How did Mark displace Matthew as the foundational gospel for Christian faith and find itself as the chief theological model for liberal Protestant, and eventually liberal Catholic theology?" We conjecture that once the Marcan hypothesis had become a popular alternative to the more radical Tübingen hypothesis this transformation happened imperceptibly and unconsciously in response to the ideological need of the German state for a theological defense against a perceived "Catholic" threat. This perceived threat was triggered by Pius IX and his close advisers who were seen as having bulldozed through the Vatican Council, over the opposition of liberals from northern Europe and the United States, the decrees on papal supremacy and papal infallibility — decrees which were expected to rally a coalition of ultramontane forces against Protestant Prussia — decrees which proceeded from and depended upon the Peter passage found only in Matthew. Liberal Catholic losers at Vatican Council I, after the *Kulturkampf* was over, eventually regrouped, and in Vatican Council II, with assistance from various quarters, they became the winners. Meanwhile, however, they had learned an important lesson. By Vatican Council II, they had come to recognize who was sovereign in Germany; It was Mark, not Matthew [35].

The sovereignty of Mark in the Second Reich was quickly passed to all societies outside Germany which enjoyed a symbiotic relationship to the Second Reich through the agency of German *Wissenschaft*, whose currency through state supported research was ever on the rise.

It may be questioned whether church of England scholars at the venerable British universities at Oxford and Cambridge would uncritically take over Marcan primacy from their German Protestant colleagues. But that they did has been documented [36]. And that they did so is less surprising when it is recognized that

the ideological needs of English society, with its church of England anti-Roman Catholic majority and its Roman Catholic minority (and with its Christian majority and its Jewish minority), were not so very different from those of Bismarck's Germany.

EPILOGUE

The historian can seldom date with precision the exact beginning of any social phenomenon. But if there was a decisive moment when the social conditions prevailed which can account for when and why the tradition of the church that Matthew is our earliest gospel became anathema for liberal Protestant theology, it would seem to have been that moment in June of 1871 when Bismarck decided to "move vigorously" against recalcitrant priests of the Roman Catholic church.

If Wallace is correct in suggesting that this decision was the result of a report from Rome that the papacy was assuming an "anti-German attitude", we have what is essential to explain what happened. For the previous month Bismarck had taken an action that forced the hand of the pope. In May of 1871, Bismarck had told the Prussian legislators that the Prussian cabinet was determined to take steps to make it "impossible" for Catholic priests in Prussia to "assert with impunity" that they will be guided by canon rather than by Prussian law. It is important to grasp the essential nature of the constitutional crisis that this juxtaposition of "canon" and "Prussian" law entailed. Canon law rests on the Bible. The New Testament is the norm of the Christian Bible. And within the New Testament the gospels traditionally have normed canon law since there we have the legislative voice of the Son of God. Within this Four-fold gospel canon it is the first gospel that has been foundational for the church. There, Christ as the New Moses, reveals his law for his church (Matt 28,18-20).

The gospel of Matthew is the backbone of Canon law. To break that back was to break the back of resistance to Prussian authority. Bismarck, himself, could hardly have thought consciously in these terms since Matthew is scripture and Lutherans honor scripture. But "canon law" could be attacked since that was identified as "Catholic", and for the Protestant majority it could be construed as dispensable. In any case let there be no mistake about it; it is ecclesiastical authority as it comes to its quintessential expression in the gospel of Matthew that inspired the pope and that stood in Bismarck's path. For in addition to the Peter passage, there is the apostolic discourse (Matt 10,18-38).

This apostolic discourse of Jesus is what brought the Roman empire to its knees, and has steeled the martyrs of the church ever since. The Second Reich with its Protestant Kaiser resurrected the specter of Caesars of old. And Bismarck's *Real politik* was bringing the crisis to a head. His successful move against canon law

helped pave the way for the more blatant departure from traditional legal norms made by Hitler in 1933.

Sociologically speaking, "Marcan primacy" leads to a deconstruction of canonical authority based on the apostolic witness of the church as traditionally understood.

As most Lutherans think, however, it is not Matthew, but Paul who norms the New Testament. And as every good Lutheran in Bismarck's day knew, the apostle Paul teaches that Christians should be subject to the governing authorities. (Rom 13,1-5)

Traditionally the church had always read these words in Romans in dialogue with the words of Jesus embodied in the gospels which steel resistance against those unrighteous authorities who can kill the body but who cannot kill the soul. But in Lutheran circles where the authority of the gospels, especially the canonical authority of Matthew, was under a cloud, this essential exegetical dialogue was suspended, and Rom 13,1-5 was absolutized to serve state *Interesse*. This meant that Bismarck could count on the support of a Protestant dominated Prussian legislature in his move to fine, arrest, and imprison Catholic priests and bishops who resisted the authority of the German state. But such measures could only bring temporary relief. They would provide no long-term solution for church-state relations. To guarantee the German Catholic church the long term priestly and episcopal leadership essential to the required *modus vivendi*, Bismarck turned to the state controlled university system. By requiring all clerics to be educated in the state universities, he drafted into forces on his side, the German university professorate. The end result of this move by Bismarck was to eradicate ultra-montanism in German Catholicism.

There was no need for any official directions from Berlin to the university professorate. Such open directions would have been counter productive in any case. Many Protestant German professors had courageously fought against princely government authorities in behalf of German unity in the first half of the nineteenth century. And now that Bismarck had brought about that German unity, these professors and their colleagues were more than willing to give their support to an Empire that respected and honored the German professor. These well paid servants of the state were perfectly capable of grateful self-censorship. One consequence of this was an ever-increasing tendency to consent by silence to the Protestant shibboleth of "Marcan primacy". It is in this sense that it is possible for the historian to say with no small measure of confidence that "Marcan primacy" won by default. This helps to explain how a critical mass of scholarly opinion, in spite of convincing evidence to the contrary, formed in favor of Marcan primacy, so that during the first half of the 20th century it became possible for almost all scholars to believe (what today many scholars have come to disbelieve) that the

"Two-source hypothesis" was an "assured result" of nineteenth century German scholarship.

William R. Farmer

Endnotes

1. English translation by D.L. NIEWYK. *History and Criticism of the Marcan Hypothesis*, Macon, GA. Mercer — Edinburgh, Clark, 1980.

2. *From Strauss to Holtzmann and Meijboom: Synoptic Theories Advanced during the Consolidation of Germany. 1830-70*, in NT 29 (1987) 1-21, p. 18.

3. H.U. MEIJBOOM, *Geschiedenis en critiek der Marcushypothese*, Amsterdam, Kraay, 1866, 248 pp.

4. Correspondence between Bismarck and Lederhose who represented the university in the appointment process focus on Holtzmann's church politics. There is no reference to the work of Meijboom (nor, for that matter, to anything Holtzmann had ever published) in any of the documents preserved in the file on Holtzmann in the university archives in Strasbourg. —The whole correspondence deserves publication and literary and social analysis.

5. A.W. WARD, *Cambridg- Historical Series, Germany 1815-1890. Vol III 1871-1890*, Cambridge, University Press, 1918, pp. 56-57.

6. *Op. cit.*, p. 57.

7. *Loc. cit.*

8. *Loc. cit.*

9. *Loc. cit.*

10. K. von HASE, *Handbook to the controversy with Rome*, translated from the 7th ed. of the *Handbuch der protestantisehen Polemik gegen die römisch-katholische Kirche*, edited with notes by A.W. STREANE, London, 1906, Vol. 1, pp.311-312. [Bracketing and italicizing mine. "remnant" is my translation. W.R.F.]

11. Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1948.

12. WALLACE, *The Papacy*, p. 154. [Enumeration mine. W.R.F.]

13. G. GOYAU, *L Allemagne religieuse, le Catholicism 1800-1870*. Paris, 1872, Vol. IV, pp. 299f., as translated and commented upon by WALLACE, *The Papacy*, pp. 154-155. (All italicizing mine. W.R.F.) There was at this time no papal representative to Germany. "The Nuncio was to the kingdom of Bavaria, a post that Eugenio Pacelli held during the First World War, and he subsequently became the first Nuncio to Germany after it became a Republic", so Winthrop Brainerd in a letter to me dated 4 May 1987.

14. E. L. EVANS, *The German Carter Party 1870-1933. A Study in Political Catholicism*, Southern Illinois University Press, 1981, p. 76.

15. WALLACE, *The Papacy*, p. 193.

16. *Op. cit.*, p. 194.

17. *Op. cit.*, pp. 194-195.

18. This simple and unqualified identification of Catholic with "ultramontane" represents an extreme view.

19. Frankfurter Zeitung, February of 1875, as cited in WALLACE, *The Papacy*, p. 193.

20. L HAHN, *Geschichte des Kulturkampf in Preussen*, Berlin, 1881, pp. 102f. English translation by L.P. WALLACE, *The Papacy*, p. 201.

21. WALLACE, *The Papacy*, p. 201.

22. WARD, *Germany* (n. 5), pp. 63-64. A distinction should be borne in mind between the Imperial Parliament, the Reichstag, and the Prussian legislature, the Prussian Landtag. The "May Laws" were Prussian, not Imperial. However, because of her enormous size, Prussia dominated the German Empire, exercising a virtual veto in the Reichstag.

23. January 9, 1873.

24. WARD, *Germany*, pp. 65-66

25. WALLACE, *The Papacy*, p. 215.

26. WALLACE, *The Papacy*, p. 216.

27. *The Riddle of Roman Catholicism*, New York, Abingdon, 1959, p. 79.

28, 29 and 30. WALLACE, *The Papacy*, p. 241-242.

31. WALLACE, *Op. Cit.*, p. 247. "The consequences of the *Kulturkampf* were extremely serious for the church. More than a million Catholics were deprived of the sacraments because thousands of priests were in exile or in prison. There were no bishops available to ordain new priests, because they had been relieved by the state of their sees after their failure to secure the approval of the prefects to their ordination; two archbishops (Cologne and Posen) had been exiled. The government forbade parish priests to visit other parishes than their own to give the sacraments. And, as a sort of crowning insult, priority in the use of the churches was given to the handful of anti-Roman Old Catholics, and the government created a new bishopric which it bestowed upon the leader of that sect".

(E.E.Y. HALES, *The Catholic Church in the Modern World: A Survey from the French Revolution to the Present*, London, Eyre and Spottiswoode, Burns and Oats, 1958. p. 235).

This undocumented summary paragraph represents how a twentieth century Catholic historian could look back on the *Kulturkampf* from a post-Third Reich perspective, and yet leave unnoted in his book how Bismarck paved the way for Hitler. Apparently because Bismarck "believed in the value of the church and was concerned to gain control over it, so as to make sure it gave support to his regime", whereas "Hitler's personal standpoint was fundamentally antithetical to Christianity as such" (p. 296), justified in this historian's mind not drawing his reader's attention to the way in which Bismarck's actions provided Hitler with legal precedents, to consider. The fact that there are differences between Bismarck and Hitler that are decisive, does not justify a failure to take continuity seriously — as well as the discontinuity in the *modus operandi* of the leaders of the Second and Third Reich. A main difference between Bismarck and Hitler is their relationships with Jews. Bismarck chose for his personal banker a Jew. Hitler believed that Jews had stabbed Germany in the back.

32. *Provinzial-Correspondenz*.

33. The realistic but subtle relationship between the professorate and state *Interesse* emerges clearly in two excellent books on the German universities.

These are: C.E. McCLELLAND, *State, Society, and University in Germany, 1700-1914*, Cambridge, University Press, 1980, and F.K. RINGER *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890-1933*, Cambridge, MA, 1969.

For documentation of the anti-Catholic ethos of the Prussian controlled universities in the imperial period see K.H. JARAUSCH, *Student, Society and Politics in Imperial Germany*, Princeton, NJ, University Press, 1982, and J.E. CRAIG, *Scholarship and Nation Building: The University of Strasbourg and Alsatian Society 1870-1939*, Chicago, IL, University Press, 1984.

34. E.E.Y. HALES, *The Catholic Church in the Modern World* (n. 31), p. 241. A very important contribution to Vatican Council II was made by French Patristic and Liturgical theological scholarship.

35. It should be noted that in contrast to Vatican Council I, none of the decrees issuing from Vatican II proceed from the Peter passage in Matthew. With Vatican II behind them, contemporary Roman Catholic scholars can justifiably interpret their more favorable reception by Protestant colleagues as evidence that they are now more readily perceived as capable of being free of Vatican influence. It is not clear, however, whether they realize that this more favorable perception has been bought at a price, i.e. the apparent wholesale unquestioning academic acceptance of Marcan primacy (read: "anti-ultramontanism"). It is quite wrong however to think that contemporary liberal Catholic acceptance of Marcan priority is due only, if at all, to concern over what Protestants might think. To most, if not all liberal Catholics, Marcan priority is intellectually satisfying. It is with a genuine feeling of liberation that a liberal Catholic exegete can bring forth new insights from Mark, which insights somehow seem to be more difficult to derive from the more sophisticated (and ecclesiastically developed) gospels of Matthew and Luke. Mark does not seem to represent freedom from Catholic dogma so much as a fresh start in the exciting quest for a putatively more valid faith tested less by canon law or church doctrine, than by common Christian experience. For scholars who question Marcan priority not to recognize this positive and liberating contribution of Marcan priority to the ongoing life of liberal Catholicism, will only lead to further misunderstanding and miscommunication. Whether Mark in fact is less sophisticated or less ecclesiastically and/or theologically developed than the longer gospels is another matter. But in learning from one another one must take seriously how the other perceives things and how the other feels about what he/she perceives to be the case.

36. W.R. FARMER, *The Synoptic Problem. A Critical Analysis*, New York, Macmillan, 1964, pp. 48-198.

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