German inter-monastic politics and the Reformation of the sixteenth century

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The story is well known among Protestants. When Pope Leo X learned of the dispute surrounding Luther’s 95 theses he mistakenly dismissed it as a monastic squabble.¹ There is strong evidence, however, that while the Reformation of the sixteenth century proved to be ultimately much more than a monastic dispute, in its earliest phases much of what occurred can best be understood in light of the complexities of the inter-monastic rivalry between the Augustinians and Dominicans.

The Augustinian movement

Two types of Augustinians emerged during the medieval period: the Order of Canons Regular, who were largely clergy connected to specific churches or cathedrals; and the Augustinian hermits, who were a true monastic order.² In the fifteenth century a split occurred within the Hermit tradition between ‘observant’ congregations that sought reform through strict adherence to the Rule, and the ‘conventuals’, who sought to interpret the Rule more flexibly.³ The monastery Luther entered was the Erfurt Observant Congregation of Augustinian Hermits.⁴

The philosophical and theological gulf between Augustinians and Dominicans

The rediscovery of Aristotle in the West prompted the two greatest theologians of the Dominican Order, Albertus Magnus and his student Thomas Aquinas, to develop an

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¹ Cf. for example Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, vol vii, 170f, who attributes Pope Leo X with saying, ‘This outbreak is a mere squabble of envious monks’.
⁴ Cf. Oberman, 130ff.
Aristotelian understanding of Christian thought. While Thomas saw himself as a loyal interpreter of the theology of Saint Augustine, he produced a distinctively new approach influenced by Aristotelianism. Augustinian theologians in the thirteenth century accused Thomas of 'approaching the position of extreme Aristotelians, and of abandoning fundamental aspects of traditional theology'. Comments against Aristotle, found frequently in the writings of Luther and his fellow Augustinians, were often thinly veiled criticisms of Dominican theology. The Dominicans rallied behind Thomas, ensuring in their general chapters of 1278 and 1279 that none of their members attack him. Eventually, Thomas was not only cleared of accusations of false doctrine, but in 1323 was canonised by Pope John XXII in Avignon.

From the perspective of Luther and his fellow Augustinians at the beginning of the sixteenth century, Augustine's place with the universities seemed under threat, and the theology of Thomas, championed by the Dominicans, was viewed as the main challenger.

Luther as Augustinian friar

The events of 1517–1520 are often interpreted in light of the later Luther and the fully evolved break with the church at Rome. The Luther of the first years of the Indulgences controversy, however, was a faithful member of the Observant Order of Augustinian Hermits.

Although Luther eventually joined the attack against the abuses of sixteenth century monasticism, he favoured reforming the monasteries rather than abandoning them. Luther wrote in his lectures on Romans: 'I believe it is better to be a monk now than it has been in the past 200 years, for this reason, that up till now monks have shrunk back from the cross, and it has been an honourable thing to be a monk. Now, however, they are beginning to incur men's displeasure. For that is what being a monk means: to be hated by the world and to appear foolish in its sight'.

Luther's trip to Rome in 1511 occurred within the context of a dispute within the observant faction of the Augustinian Hermits in which Luther opposed Staupitz's desire to keep all observant communities in Saxony as part of the one congregation. Luther felt this gave too much control and restricted individual efforts at reform and he went to Rome as the representative of those who held this view. That a professor of theology should take time out to go to Rome over such a minor dispute might seem remarkable. But Luther was a member of an Order, and his responsibilities within that Order included oversight for seven Augustinian communities. Luther had to visit these periodically, write

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9 Oberman, 131ff.
reports to the prior at Erfurt, and in one instance had to intervene and remove the prior of the Neustadt/Orka community.\textsuperscript{10} Luther’s responsibilities included representing and promoting Augustinian theological distinctives within the Wittenberg faculty.

The Dominicans at the time of Luther were very powerful in the German universities thanks to the fame and influence of Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, whose theology they championed. The Augustinians, on the other hand, championed the theology of Augustine. The battle for control of the universities of Germany and central Europe was at times fierce. Indeed, one of the reasons the young Luther was hurried by his Order into the position in biblical studies at the new University of Wittenberg was to ensure that the theological faculty there would be controlled by Augustinians rather than Dominicans.

In a report to Johann Lang, the prior of Luther’s home cloister in Erfurt, Luther wrote on 18 May 1517 the following account of progress at the University of Wittenberg:

Our theology and St Augustine are progressing well, and with God’s help rule at our University. Aristotle is gradually falling from his throne, and his final doom is only a matter of time. It is amazing how the lectures on the Sentences are disdained. Indeed, no one can expect to have any students if he does not want to teach this theology, that is, lecture on the Bible or on St. Augustine …\textsuperscript{11}

If the pre-Reformation letters of Luther indicate any sense of an opponent, it is neither Rome nor the bishops, but Aristotle, whose thought stands at the foundation of the theology of Thomas and the Dominicans, who, as Owen Chadwick writes, were the ‘constituted guardians of orthodoxy and natural antagonists to the Austin Friars’.\textsuperscript{12} To the Dominicans, in the larger context of the European universities and the established influence of Thomas, the efforts of German Augustinians like Luther probably appeared a minor and regional annoyance. For Luther, however, the rivalry was very real. It is in this context that the events that began to unfold in 1517 must be understood. Luther, a rising star of the Observant Augustinians, professor of theology, and overseer of seven Augustinian monasteries, attacks Tetzel, the prior of his Dominican monastery and a papal inquisitor. Some of the first into the fray on both sides of the debate were Augustinians and Dominicans rallying, respectively, behind their man.

Luther’s 95 theses were written as an Augustinian. In his explanation of the theses, later in 1517, he indicates that he is aware that he is challenging the authority of those ‘who want St Thomas to be approved by the church in everything’.\textsuperscript{13} And in a letter to Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz, dated the same day as the posting of the theses,
he makes several references to the ‘quacking of the preachers of indulgences’, ‘the gross misunderstanding … which comes from these preachers’, and warns that if Albrecht doesn’t act, ‘someone may rise up, by means of publications, [and] silence those preachers’. All of which are unmistakable allusions to Tetzel and his Dominican colleagues charged with proclaiming the indulgence.  

In May of 1518 Luther attended the triennial chapter meeting of the Augustinian Hermits at Heidelberg. He was scheduled to give a report on his term as vicar over seven Saxon communities, and to present a paper on Augustine’s view of human depravity. Despite the storm now surrounding him, Luther attended and delivered his report and paper. He feared he would be condemned and turned over to church authorities, but found that many in his Order supported him. The indulgence question was not on the agenda, but the subject came up in unofficial gatherings. The chapter had received some letters against Luther, but no action was taken against him.

The older monks just shook their heads, but the younger monks were enthusiastic in their support, causing Luther to comment: ‘I have great hope [that] … this true theology, rejected by opinionated old men, will pass over to the younger generation’. According to Gonzalez, Luther’s case was assisted at the chapter meeting in that many saw Luther’s dispute with Tetzel ‘as one more instance of the ancient rivalry between Dominicans and Augustinians, and therefore refused to abandon their champion’.  

**Augustinian support for Luther**

Ludwig Pastor’s *History of the Popes* describes the situation of the Augustinians at the time of Leo X:

> In Lower Germany, just at the critical time of the Lutheran revolt, the Saxon province of Luther’s own Order, the Augustinians, had so degenerated that, in 1521, it broke away as a whole, and, with the exception of a few members, followed the new religion.  

While followers of Luther would prefer to credit the theological health of the Augustinian Order as the main reason for this support, what is not in dispute is that significant sections of the Order broke away to follow the new evangelical faith. We must also take into account Luther’s own stature as the vicar of his region over seven houses and as professor at Wittenberg. By 1517, 100 Augustinians were either studying or had studied with Luther. The impact on the Augustinian Order was profound. Hundreds, including many entire communities, left the Order, most taking up pastoral duties in parishes in those lands that followed the Reformation.

Significantly, a number of Augustinians remained in their communities while supporting  

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14 LW 48: 45ff.  

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the Reformation. The most famous instance was that of the Augustinian Monastery of Möllenbeck. Under the leadership of its prior, Hermann Wenig, the community chose to maintain the essential framework of its liturgical and spiritual life. As an evangelical order the community experienced substantial growth as an ever-increasing number of novices sought entry. The cloister, which retained the Augustinian Rule, established a school for the 'continuing education' of evangelical clergy, and in 1623 published an apology of evangelical monasticism written by one of its members, Conrad Hoyers. Unfortunately, the physical plant and life of the monastery were so greatly damaged during the Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648) that it was unable ever to recover. It was finally disbanded in 1675 after nearly 120 years of evangelical monasticism.\(^\text{17}\)

Some of the more significant defections of Augustinians to the evangelical cause include the following: \(^\text{18}\)

- Johann Lang, prior of the Erfurt community since 1516, Luther’s home cloister, left in 1520 with 14 friars, out of a total of approximately 50.
- The entire Herzberg community, 1522.
- The entire Wittenberg community (except Luther!), by 1522.\(^\text{19}\)
- Wenceslas Link, Vicar General of the Augustinian Order, 22 January 1523, who married in that same year with Luther as preacher at his wedding.
- Johannes Brenz, 1523, Reformer of Württenburg.
- The entire Gotha community, 1525.
- The entire Nürnberg community, 1525. This community became the "spiritual headquarters of the nascent Reformation when it first started to spread to the cities of Southern and Southwestern Germany."\(^\text{20}\) It is one of reasons that Nürnberg and its environs went with the Reformation while the remainder of Franken (northern Bavaria) remained Roman Catholic.
- Gerard Heckler, provincial of Thuringia and Saxony, 1521.
- Tilemann Schnaber, provincial and successor of Heckler, and former student of Luther, 1523.
- Many of the monks of the Antwerp community, by 1523.
- George Teschler, provincial, 1534.
- By 1543, 14 entire communities in the Rhenish-Swabian province had disbanded and only 40 friars were left in the province.
- By 1560 only two of 24 communities remained in the province of Thuringia and

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\(^{18}\) This list is compiled chiefly from David Gutierrez, History of the Order of St. Augustine, vol. 2. The Augustinians from the Protestant Reformation to the Peace of Westphalia, Augustinian Historical Institute, Villanova, Penn, 1979, 29ff; Kunzelmann, 510ff, and editorial notes from Luther’s Works.


\(^{20}\) So Oberman, 53.
Saxony.
The province of Bavaria, which included Austria, Bohemia and Poland, lost 9 of 50 communities, 5 alone from Silesia.

In lands where the Reformation did not yet have a significant foothold there was also support for Luther among his fellow Augustinians. In France, John Chalelain was burned at the stake for holding Lutheran ideas. And in 1542, in the aftermath of the Regensburg Religious Disputation that involved the moderate Italian Cardinal Contarini, Peter Martyr Vermigli, a well-known Italian Augustinian, converted to Protestantism.21

In England several Austin friars, as the Augustinians were known there, were among those pushing for reform. Most notable among these were two members of the Cambridge Augustinian community: its prior, Robert Barnes, and Miles Coverdale. After the breakup of the Cambridge Augustinians in 1525, Barnes went to Wittenberg where he studied with Luther. He returned to England under Cromwell but was burned at the stake in 1540. Miles Coverdale, a member of Barnes’ community, fled to Zurich, where he printed a complete English translation of the Bible in 1535.22

Some of the earliest supporters of Luther outside Germany were his fellow Augustinians in the Netherlands. Two of these, Henry Voes and John van den Esschen, were burned at the stake on 1 July 1523 in Brussels, becoming the first Lutheran martyrs.23 The account of the martyrdom of one of their colleagues, Henry von Zütpen, a fellow Augustinian and former student of Luther, illustrates something of the ongoing tension between Dominicans and Augustinians. In the town of Meldolf on 10 December 1524, Brother Henry was beaten and lynched by a mob that was unsuccessful in their efforts to burn him. Brother Henry was attacked after complaints and agitation from the local Dominicans. In the words of Luther: ‘As soon as [Brother Henry] arrived and before he had even preached a sermon, the devil stirred up especially a certain Augustine Torneborch, prior of the [Dominican] Black Cloister’. After initial complaints failed to get results, Torneborch enlisted the aid of another Dominican, a certain Doctor William, to secure the assistance of the Franciscans.24 When about 500 peasants had been persuaded to capture Brother Henry, it was the Dominicans, Luther informs us, who ‘provided them with lights and torches so they were able to make sure that the good Henry did not escape’.25

Yet we must not think that Luther was without opposition from within his own Order. Augustinian opposition to Luther came chiefly from the Italian brothers.26 But German

22 Owen Chadwick, The Reformation, 113f.
23 George Forell, Introduction to The burning of Brother Henry, in LW 32: 263.
24 Luther, The burning of Brother Henry, LW 32: 278, 282f.
26 Gutierrez, 32.
Augustinian opposition to Luther also existed, most notably from his former professor at Erfurt, Bartholomaeus Arnoldi von Usingen (died 1532), Konrad Traeger (died 1542), and Johannes Hoffmeister (died 1547).

For Luther the most telling and personally challenging ‘opposition’ came from an unexpected source, his one-time confessor and Vicar-general of the Order, Johann von Staupitz. Staupitz, perhaps the best-known and most influential Augustinian of his time, had done much to inspire and guide Luther toward reform. In the end, however, he found he could neither bear to repudiate Luther, nor could he support a schism within the church. Staupitz, for reasons that are not entirely clear, released Luther from his vows after the meeting with Cajetan in 1518. But shortly thereafter he wrote to Luther inviting him to leave Wittenberg, if he was forced to flee, and join him (Staupitz) in Salzburg ‘that we may live and die together. … Deserted let us follow the deserted Christ.’ Staupitz was willing to die for the issues at stake, but unwilling to sacrifice the unity of the church for them. He chose, dramatically, to apply for papal permission to leave the Order. In 1520 he left the Augustinians and became abbot of the Benedictine convent of St Peter in Salzburg, a position he retained until his death on 28 December 1524. Like Erasmus, also a former Augustinian, he found himself under pressure to distance himself from Luther. He finally came out in criticism of Luther in a booklet titled Von dem heiligen rechten christlichen Glauben, which was directed against Luther’s view of justification by faith alone—which he feared left no room for legitimate works. The book appeared posthumously in 1525.

By and large, however, there was a reluctance of Augustinians to come out in opposition to Luther. Roland Bainton is correct in his observation that ‘the Augustinians were conceivably the more loath to suppress their obstreperous brother because their rivals, the Dominicans, were pressing hard. This is the truth of the ... statement attributed to Pope Leo. The Dominicans rallied to the aid of Tetzel …’

Dominican opposition to Luther

If the case for widespread support of Luther among his fellow Augustinians is clear, then the case for the general opposition by Dominicans is equally striking. The number of Dominicans joining the Reformation ranks was very small. One notable exception was the Dominican Martin Bucer, who attended the chapter meeting of the Augustinians in Heidelberg in May of 1518 as a guest and heard Luther speak. He became the leader of the Reformation in Strasburg and also played a role in the Reformation in England.
controversy, and in writing. The Order ran well ahead of other catholic defenders in point of time, numbers, and excellence of doctrine. And Paulus, writing a century ago on the German Dominican opposition to Luther, contended: ‘In Germany no other religious organisation produced so many and such outstanding literary champions as the Order of St. Dominic’. Chadwick similarly has observed this massing of opposition to Luther on the part of the Dominicans. He writes: ‘Was … [Luther’s] attack upon indulgences heretical? The Dominican theologians, constituted guardians of orthodoxy and natural antagonists to the Austin Friars, believed that Luther was a heretic and tried to prove their case.’

Only David Bagchi has suggested that the Dominican opposition to Luther is over-estimated, when looked at from the perspective of all Catholic pamphleteers attacking Luther. He notes that of fifty-seven such controversialists, only twelve were Dominicans. He admits, however, that they far outpaced their nearest monastic rivals, the Franciscans, who were represented by just five writers. It should also be noted that Bagchi is looking at the whole period of the controversy, by the end of which the dispute had become much more widespread. In the earliest and most critical years, the Dominicans by far dominated the pamphlet war against Luther.

Indeed, from the very beginning of the controversy the affair looked like a dispute with the Dominican Order. It was the actions and approach to the sale of indulgences of the Dominican Tetzel who stirred Luther to action in the first place. It was the provincial of the Saxon Dominicans, Hermann Rab, who is believed to have formally brought the charge of heresy against Luther in Rome. The chief legal advisor to Leo, Girolamo Chinucci, and his chief theological advisor, Sylvester Prierias, were the first to be asked to investigate the case against Luther, and both were Dominicans. In turn, both Prierias and afterward, Cajetan, former head of the Dominican Order, were asked to take up the case against Luther. Many of the most prominent and vocal opponents of Luther were Dominicans, including Johannes Tetzel, Johann Eck, Silvester Prierias (Mazzolini), and Cardinal Thomas Cajetan. Philip Schaff suggests that the three most prominent writers against Luther were Tetzel of Leipzig, Johann Eck of Ingolstadt University, and Conrad Wimpina (1460–1531), first Rector of the University of Frankfurt am Main. All three were Aristotelians, and Tetzel and Eck were Dominicans.

35 Chadwick, 47.
37 Michael Mullet, Martin Luther, Routledge, 2004, p. 81 notes: ‘Once it became evident to the papal court that the attempt to muzzle Luther using the structures of the Augustinian Order had failed, … the Dominican theologian Sylvester Mazzolini Prierias … provided the doctrinal materials for a prosecution’.
38 So Bagchi, Luther’s earliest opponents, 21f.
Wimpina (born Conrad Koch) had served twenty years on the theological faculty of Leipzig, where Tetzel had been one of his students. It was Wimpina, who later served as one of the authors of the Roman Catholic *Confutation*, written in response to the Lutheran *Confessio Augustana* of 1530, to whom Tetzel turned for help in formulating a response to Luther.\(^{40}\) During his career Wimpina was a secular priest and academic. But when he died on 17 May 1531, it was as a resident of the Dominican Amorbach monastery. Kawerau suggests that he may have sought the solitude of monastic retreat in the evening of his life.\(^{41}\) We then find the remarkable fact that the three most prominent critics of Luther during his lifetime were all either Dominicans or strongly associated with the Order.

Johann Tetzel (Diez) is often viewed by historians as a relatively uneducated preacher and pawn of other forces of his age. Tetzel was accused of avarice and immorality, including by the papal nuncio, Carl von Milititz, and did lead extravagant processions into towns to proclaim the indulgence.\(^{42}\) But Tetzel was also prior of a Dominican Cloister, a Doctor of Theology, awarded in Frankfurt through the support of Wimpina in 1518 for his treatises against Luther,\(^{43}\) and papal inquisitor. Tetzel was no mere hawker of indulgences. He was a well-known and influential member of the Dominican Order in Germany. The contract to sell indulgences in the lands of Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz was handled by Tetzel largely through ‘subcontracting’ to other Dominican preachers.\(^{44}\) The position as commissioner of the sale would only strengthen the influence of the Dominicans in the episcopal court of Albrecht.

The positions of Luther and Tetzel within their respective orders are significant. The attack by Luther, a prominent Augustinian University Professor, on Tetzel, a prominent Dominican prior and papal inquisitor, could hardly be seen by Dominicans as anything

\(^{40}\) Wimpina reduced Tetzel’s original 106 theses against Luther’s 95 theses to 78, which were then published in Frankfurt. G. Kawerau, ‘Wimpina’, in *Herzog Real-Encyklopedie fuer protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, vol 17, Leipzig, 1886, 197f.

\(^{41}\) Kawerau, 195–99.


\(^{43}\) The level of support of Wimpina in this matter is disputed..Löschler points out that both the thesis for his Licentiate (106 theses) and the 50 theses for his Doctor of Theology were later published by Wimpina under his own name. Giesler and Köstlin agree, but Gröne and Hergenröther ascribe authorship to Tetzel. So Schaff, vol vii, 151f.n.

\(^{44}\) The association of Dominicans with the selling of indulgences is illustrated by the woodcutting of Hans Holbein (Bainton, 55), that shows the Pope giving the letter authorising the indulgence to a Dominican, probably meant to be Tetzel. Several other Dominicans are in the foreground collecting money, with another driving away a beggar who cannot afford the price. In an interesting aside, one of the major contemporary non-Dominican opponents of Luther, Johannes Cochlaeus, in his book *The deeds and writings of Martin Luther from the year of the Lord 1517 to the year 1546 related chronologically to all posterity*, the extraordinary claim is made that Pope Leo had intended to give the indulgence contract to the Augustinians before he was persuaded that Tetzel was better qualified. Cochlaeus goes on to claim that the Augustinians ‘took this as badly as possible, especially Johannes Staupitz, their Vicar General in Germany, and Martin Luther, Doctor of Theology, Ordinary at Wittenberg—as though these two were the two head rams of their flock’. E Vaniver, R Keen and T Frazel, eds, *Luther’s lives: two contemporary accounts of Martin Luther*, Manchester University Press, 2002, 57.
other than an attempt to embarrass the Order. It is therefore no surprise that many prominent German Dominicans took up the defense of Tetzel and sought to lay counter-charges against Luther.45

Having recognised the conflict as the outgrowth of a monastic dispute between two particular Orders, it is remarkable that two of the three officials Leo X first entrusted with resolving the conflict were Dominicans. When Leo found it necessary in March 1518 to appoint a papal commission of inquiry into the affair, he appointed as head of the commission the Dominican Silvester Prierias (Mazzolini), head of the sacred palace in Rome. Prierias concluded rather quickly that Luther was an ignorant and blasphemous arch-heretic and wrote a treatise against him published in June 1518.46 Leo refers to the decision of this commission in a letter to Frederick when he says it has been determined that Luther’s teachings were heretical.47 Luther replied to Prierias’ treatise in August 1518, and Prierias answered in November of the same year. This quick and heated exchange only served to widen the gulf developing between Luther and his critics. On 7 August 1518 Luther was ordered to appear in Rome within sixty days to recant. Frederick the Wise, however, was able to intervene and arrange for an interview, with safe passage, to take place at the upcoming Diet of Augsburg.

For this occasion Leo appointed Cardinal Thomas Cajetan (1470–1534) as papal legate to represent him. Cajetan, like Prierias, was ‘a Dominican and zealous Thomist’.48 Cajetan was baptized as Jakob de Vio de Gaëta, but later changed his name to Thomas in honour of Thomas Aquinas. He joined the Dominican Order at the age of 16 and gained a reputation as an academic. He was made procurator of his Order, and in 1508 was elected General of the Dominican Order, a position he held until his appointment as Cardinal in 1517.49 Cajetan was well versed on the state of relations between the Dominicans and Augustinians and their long-running theological disputes in the German universities. Cajetan had three interviews with Luther between 12 and 14 October 1518. By all accounts he conducted himself courteously, yet he also took a firm line. He demanded that Luther recant, urged Staupitz to convert Luther, and finally refused to enter into any further dispute with ‘that deep-eyed German beast filled with strange speculations’.50

For his part, Luther found Cajetan erudite and gracious, but unwilling to discuss the real questions. Luther proposed that the matter be handed to the academics to resolve, declaring, ‘I will submit to the judgment of the universities of Basel, Freiburg, Louvain,

45 Tetzel would likely have played a larger role in the ongoing dispute with Luther were it not for two factors: 1. Many in the Roman Church and his own Order became embarrassed at aspects of his personal life and theology, and 2. his early death in 1519 during the Leipzig disputation.
46 Bainton, 68, Schaff vol vii, 170ff.
47 Bainton, 71.
and, if need be, Paris'. At the conclusion of the meeting Staupitz, for reasons not entirely clear, released Luther from his vows as an Augustinian. Yet his ongoing personal support suggests this may have been to free Luther's hand to dispute the issues rather than to cut him loose from the Order, for Luther continued his life in the monastery as before and kept up his correspondence with Staupitz as his superior. After the interview Luther complained that being forced to go to Rome would deliver him into the hands of the Dominicans.

The near success of the third man charged with resolving the conflict, the papal nuncio and Saxon, Carl von Miltitz, suggests that more may have been possible if Prierias or Cajetan had taken a different approach. Miltitz, the first non-Dominican to take a significant role in the affair, took the time as he traveled to Saxony to determine the sentiments of the people and to investigate the role of Tetzel. He found widespread support for Luther. He also heard bad reports of Tetzel and was concerned by some of his financial dealings and writings. Miltitz gave the impression of looking at both sides of the dispute by his censure of Tetzel. When he met with Luther on 6 January 1519 he was able to gain an agreement that Luther would allow German bishops to resolve the dispute, that Luther would seek pardon from the Pope for some of the things he said that had detracted from the office and person of the incumbent, and that he would warn the people against separating from the holy mother church. Both sides also agreed to keep silent on the issue while it was being resolved.

Luther complied with the agreement to such an extent that some of his supporters felt that he was betraying his convictions. He wrote the promised apology to the Pope that very day, but it appears that it was never sent as Miltitz suggested he would write instead on Luther's behalf. Sometime between 13 and 19 January Luther wrote a letter to his prince, Elector Frederick, outlining his commitment to the Roman Church and the papacy, his willingness to be banned from preaching and teaching for the sake of the unity of this church, and his willingness to recant, but only if he could do so in good conscience once someone showed him precisely where he was in error. It looked as if peace might be restored.

51 Cited in Bainton, 73.
52 So Bainton, 74.
53 In a letter to Staupitz, Luther says he nominated the archbishops of Salzburg, Trier, and Freising, (LW 48:109), though in an earlier letter to Frederick he suggests that he nominated any single one of these bishops (LW 48: 104).
54 Schaff, vol vii, 175ff.
55 LW 48: 100ff. Luther admitted that he had gone 'too far' with some of the language he had used, though he could not recant regarding fundamental concerns without dishonouring the church. He laid blame for the crisis on the indulgence sellers, contending that he was innocent of all but too harsh language. He made the promised oath of loyalty, writing: 'Most Holy Father, ... I testify before God and all his creation that I have never wanted, nor do I today want, to touch in any way the authority of the Roman church and of Your Holiness or demolish it by any craftiness. On the contrary I confess the authority of this church to be supreme over all, and that nothing, be it in heaven or on earth, is to be preferred to it, save the one Jesus Christ who is Lord of all—nor should Your Holiness believe the schemers who claim otherwise, plotting evil against this Martin'.
56 Ibid, 103ff.
The apparent diplomatic success of Miltitz was short-lived. An invitation by the prominent Dominican Professor of Ingolstadt, Johann Eck, to debate Luther's colleague at Wittenberg, Andreas Karlstadt, drew Luther out as well, resulting in a mutual violation of the peace terms brokered by Miltitz. Dr Johann Eck (Mair) (1486–1543) of Ingolstadt, not to be confused with Dr Johann von Eck of Treves who questioned Luther at Worms, was one of the ablest Dominicans to come to Tetzel's defence. Johann Eck engaged Karlstadt, and ultimately chiefly Luther, in a debate lasting three weeks (27 June–15 July, 1519) in Leipzig, home of the seriously ill Tetzel.

The challenge to Karlstadt was in keeping with the letter of the agreement forged only a few weeks earlier by Miltitz, yet, as Luther complained to Spalatin on 7 February, Eck was seeking to settle a grudge with him 'naming one man as contestant [Karlstadt] yet attacking someone else [Luther]'\(^57\). On 20 February Luther, not yet aware of the state of Tetzel's health, wrote to Staupitz complaining that Tetzel seemed to have disappeared so as to avoid accountability and that only the 'fathers of his Order' know where he has gone. Luther was also beginning to question the sincerity of Miltitz, having heard that he was authorised to take Luther to Rome by force but only adopted another stance when he realised how unpopular this would be in Germany.\(^58\) Luther also expressed reservations about whether the Pope would actually agree to allow German bishops to resolve the matter. The truce won by Miltitz was starting to slip away. When at Leipzig Karlstadt proved unequal to the task of defending the views of Luther, Luther himself took to the debate podium against his Dominican antagonist and what remained of the agreement with Miltitz disappeared beneath the turbulent waters of inter-monastic religious dispute.

What role did the inter-monastic rivalry play in the Protestant Reformation?

It is difficult to say precisely what impact the rivalry between Augustinians and Dominicans played in the events of the sixteenth century that resulted in the schism of the Western church. Clearly, competition and tensions between the two Orders were not the only factors in the schism. The political situation in Germany and Europe in general, rising German nationalism, the resentment of money 'flying across the Alps to Rome as if it had sprouted wings', the poor state of health of many parts of the church and genuine need for reform, growing resentment in political circles of the power of the church, and numerous other factors, all played a role. Yet in its initial phases there were very real possibilities for a resolution of the conflict that were missed.

The fact that the dispute erupted along existing theological fault lines between the Augustinian and Dominican Orders played a significant role in accelerating the conflict as members of both Orders rushed in to defend their champions and the honour of their respective Orders. It is legitimate to ask whether non-Dominicans would have handled the situation differently than did Prierias and Cajetan, or whether Eck and Luther would

\(^{57}\) Ibid, 106f.

\(^{58}\) Ibid, 108ff.
have been able to abide by Miltitz's truce had their monastic rivalry not played a role, or whether Luther may have reacted with less vehemence if someone other than the Dominicans were in charge of the indulgence sale, or whether the Dominicans would have joined the fray so quickly and eagerly had Luther not been an Augustinian, and Tetzel a Dominican? It is also likely that the Augustinian policy of not holding offices outside their Order left them unable to work from within the structure of the Roman curia to procure a fairer deal in the matter of Luther.

The dispute that initially arose between the Augustinian, Martin Luther, and the Dominican, Johannes Tetzel, was in many respects indeed a monastic squabble, not at all atypical of the time. But it touched upon questions so central to the Christian faith that it soon grew into a full scale schism of the Western church. This was perhaps inevitable. The question is whether this movement of reform could have stayed within the structure of the Roman church had it not been for the early and polarising responses of both Augustinians and Dominicans, seeking to support their respective champions and to ensure their own power and reputations?