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## **BY WHAT AUTHORITY?**

The issue of authority has been called the ‘material cause’ of the Reformation. Although it was such things as the sale of indulgences and the way of salvation that sparked off the Reformation, underneath these lay the question of authority. In particular what sort of authority does the Church have, where does this reside, and how does it relate to the authority of Scripture?

This old issue has not gone away and we are currently awaiting the release of a report on authority from the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC). With this in mind the current issue of *Cross†Way* will explore aspects of authority. The contemporary nature of old arguments were revealed in two statements last year from the Vatican. Firstly, in the Jubilee Bull there was teaching about how to gain special year 2000 indulgences. Secondly, a report from a gathering in 1996 on *The Primacy of the Successor of Peter* was reissued.

Of course it would be foolish to see authority solely in the context of the historical division with Rome. One of the Anglican Bishops in the USA recently commented that ‘the Church wrote the Bible and the Church can rewrite the Bible.’ This reflects not a high view of the Church but a low view of Scripture. More significantly in our age all notions of external authority are under attack as post-modern individualism looks inwards at ourselves for the sole grounds of authority. In the face of these things Christians need to be clear that God is the true source of authority and how His authority is exercised today.