



The Protestant Reformation

A 16th Century Challenge to the Catholic Church of a Major Schism/s

- Kyle Hoad
- khoad@mazenod.vic.edu.au



Study Design (extract)

Interaction of religion and society

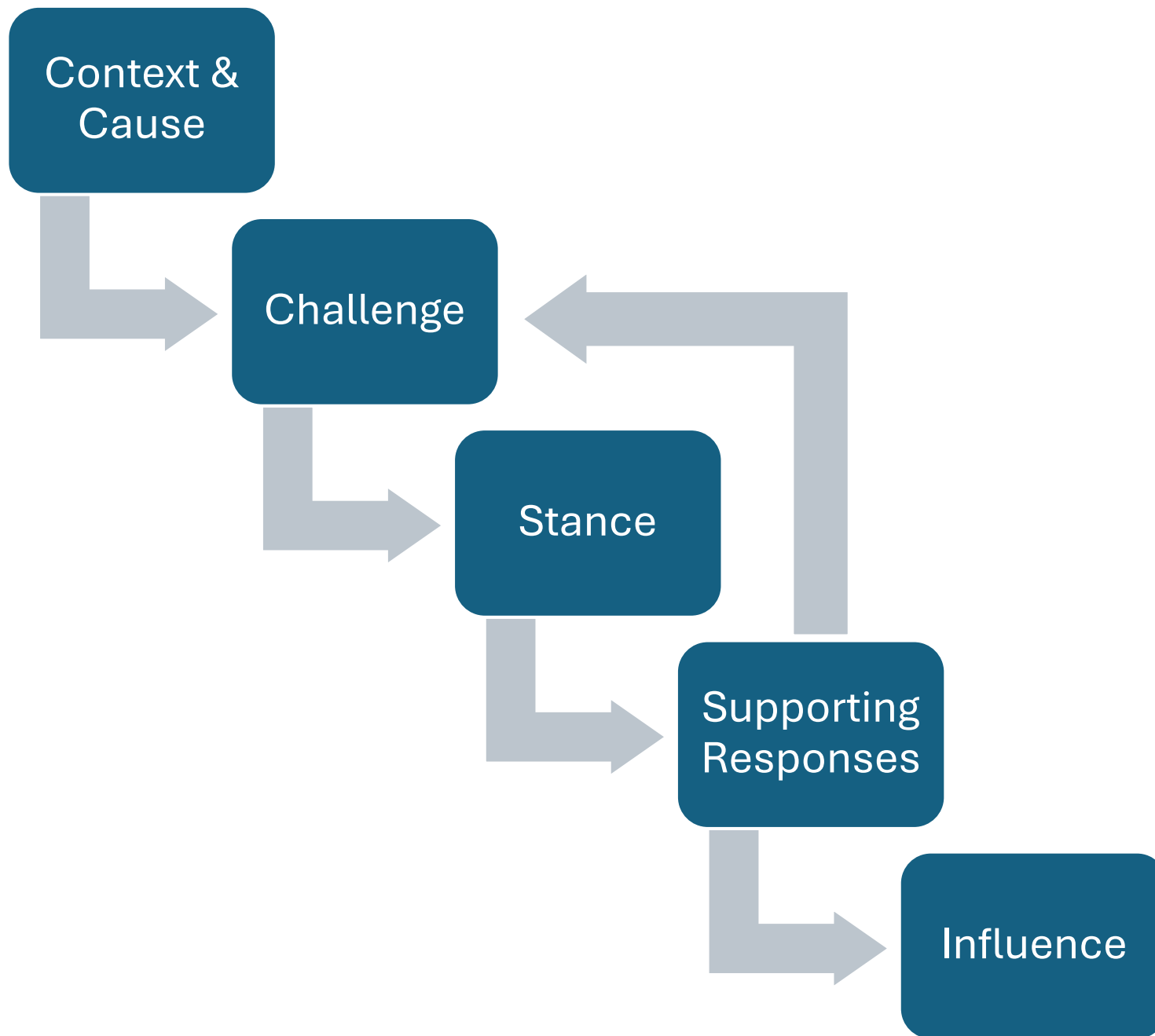
Students examine in detail one significant challenge that **has engaged or continues to engage** a religious tradition or religious denomination and society.

The selected challenge may be related to a particular time in the past or present of the religious tradition or religious denomination. It may be a challenge that has recurred and is then studied over a period of time. The selected challenge may have occurred in the past but **the responses may be ongoing and the resolution may not yet have been achieved in the present day**. Responses may involve advocacy and/or reaction by the religious tradition or religious denomination at various times.

Students investigate the broader **context** leading to the challenge, the **sources** of the challenge, relevant aspects of religion, and the **stances** and **supporting responses** adopted by the religious tradition or religious denomination to the challenge. They also examine the **influence of the responses** on the **religious tradition or religious denomination** and, where appropriate, on **wider society**.

Also: Key Knowledge and Key Skills;

- the influence of the religious tradition's or religious denomination's stances and supporting responses **on the challenge itself**
- assess the influence of the stances and supporting responses of the religious tradition or religious denomination **on the challenge itself** and, where appropriate, on wider society



Resources



- Tanner, N. (2014). *New Short History of the Catholic Church*. Bloomsbury.
- Marshall, P. (2009). *Reformation : A very short introduction*. Oxford University Press.,
- Fortosis, S. & Atkinson, H. (2022). *Fallible Heroes : Inside the Protestant Reformation*. Wipf and Stock.
- Sunshine, G. (2017). *A Brief Introduction to the Reformation*. Westminster John Knox Press.
- Armenio P. (2005). *The History of the Church*. Midwest Theological Forum.
- The Canons of the Council of Trent.
https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Canons_and_Decrees_of_the_Council_of_Trent
- https://mazenodvic-my.sharepoint.com/:f:/g/personal/khoad_mazenod_vic_edu_au/Eo0f2aCeMBdFs-AW4i9q-wkBcoGuvR5bkZpJJHz7R2F5Q?e=dlbhbJ

What is the Reformation



“We may hear primarily about Luther, Calvin, Melanchthon, and Zwingli, but the Protestant Reformation was not about a few leading individuals who independently changed the minds and hearts of hundreds of thousands of people. It involved a considerable number of reformers, especially throughout much of the sixteenth century.”

– Stephen Fortosis, & Harley T. Atkinson. (2022). Fallible Heroes : Inside the Protestant Reformation. Wipf and Stock.

What is the Reformation



“The stone may have dropped in Luther’s Germany but its ripples were felt much further afield.”

– Marshall, P. (2009). Reformation : A very short introduction. Oxford University Press.,

The Reformation is the period of Church history that coincides with a vast change in society. The Church had grown weak to the point of a moral crisis and was at the forefront of division across European society. It is a time of upheaval, division, contraction, and expansion of the Church.

What the Reformation isn't



The Reformation is not 'the Luther event'.

- Whilst Martin Luther plays an important role in the beginnings of the Reformation the Reformation itself spans multiple reformers and lands alongside vibrant Catholic internal reforms

The Reformation is not the 95 Theses

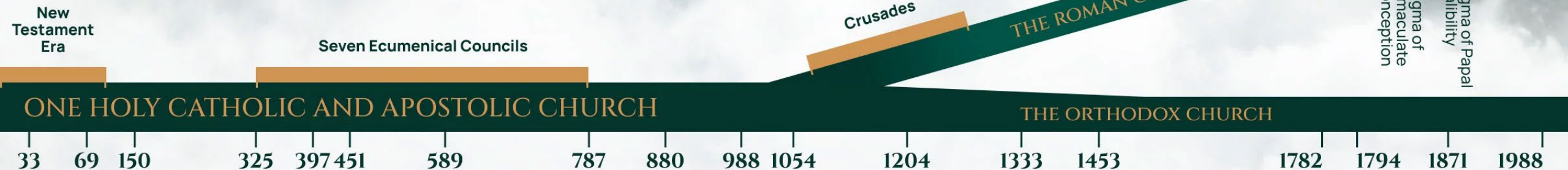
- The 95 Theses conveniently serve as the 'beginning' of the Reformation but there had been reformers prior to the 95 Theses (e.g. the Hussites) and many more after.
- The 95 Theses are criticisms of indulgences, alone they don't constitute a schism or division

The Reformation is not the 'nailing' of the 95 theses – if it even happened

- Focusing on the Luther events misses the point that the main thrust of the Reformation takes place over the course of Century
- Unnecessary focus on what Luther did or did not do with his complaints can often lead to 'storytelling'



A TIMELINE OF CHURCH HISTORY

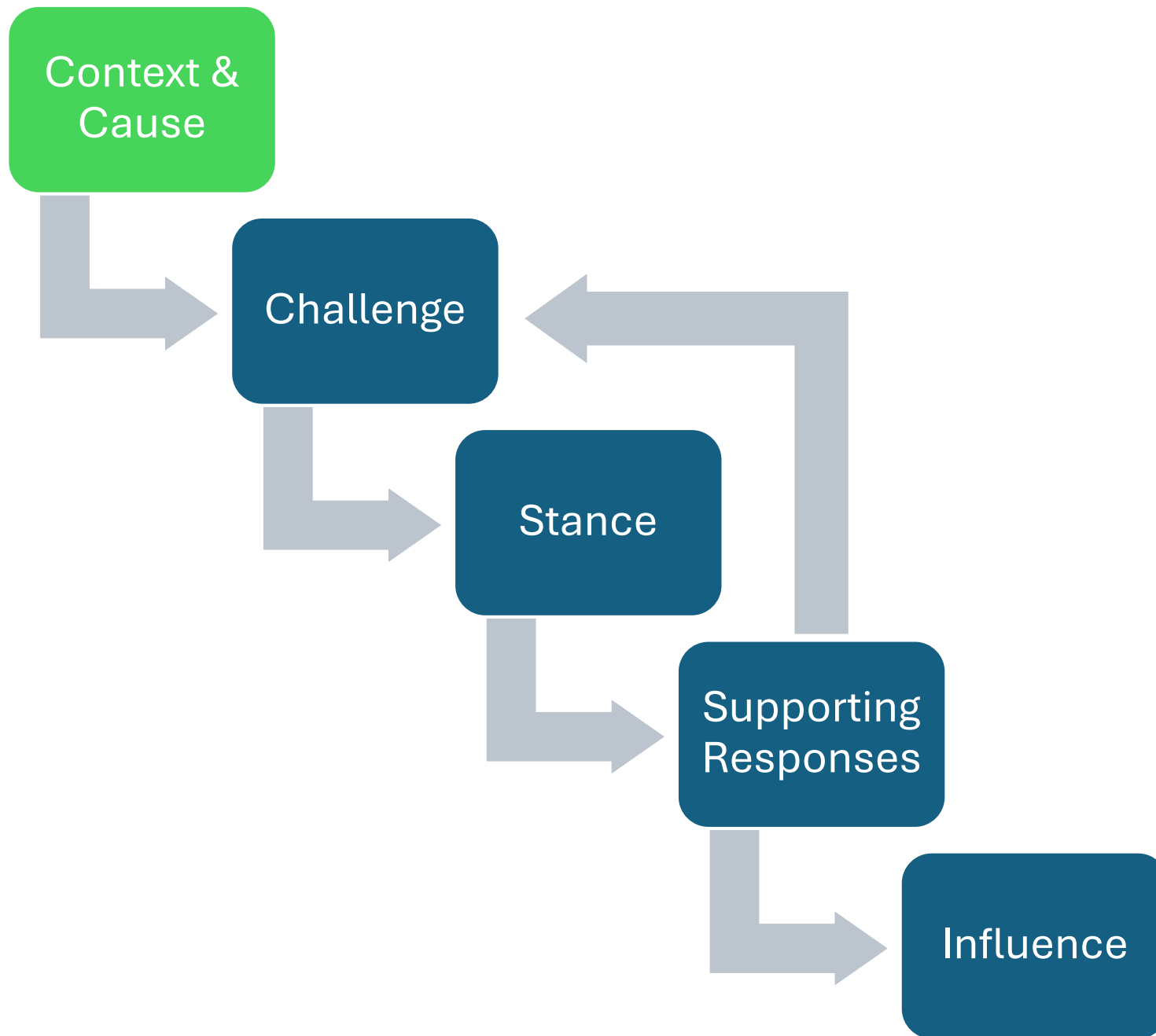


Student Definitions

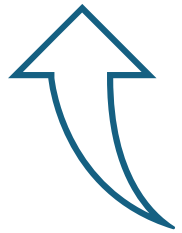


During the 16th century the Catholic Church faced the Protestant Reformation a challenge to the continued existence of the Church, which was fronted by the monk Martin Luther who spread unorthodox teaching and became “primarily an attack” (Tanner) on the Church.

The Catholic Church faced a challenge to their continued existence in the Protestant Reformation of the 16th Century which was a period of schism and division in the Church sparked by Martin Luther’s criticisms of papal indulgences.



Background to the Reformation



Rise of Early Modern Society



Moral Decline of the Church

Rise of Early Modern Society

Universities (13th Century +)

The Printing Press
(15th Century)

The Renaissance
(15th Century)

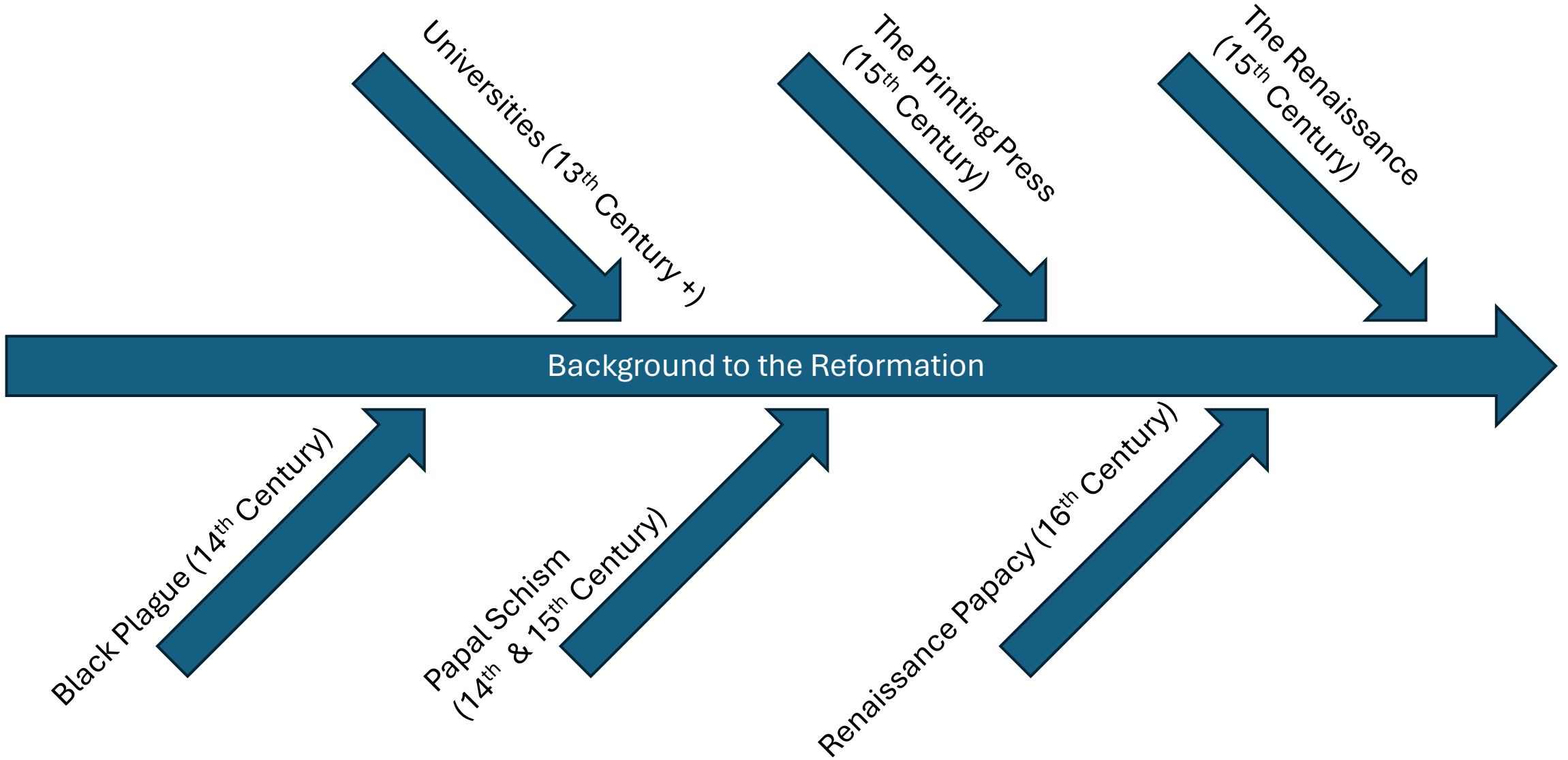
Background to the Reformation

Black Plague (14th Century)

Papal Schism
(14th & 15th Century)

Renaissance Papacy (16th Century)

Church Moral Decline



Rise of Early Modern Society



Universities

- Increase in academic training spreads across Europe. The quality of 'some' of the clergy as well as civic leaders increases greatly.
- "By the fifteenth century universities were to be found in almost all countries of western Christendom" (Tanner, 2014)

The Printing Press

- The advent of the printing press (mid 1400s) was pivotal in the rise of early modern society. An increase in literacy was to follow with information now being disseminated faster than ever before.

Renaissance

- The Renaissance was a 'rebirth' in European society with an increased focus on art, literature, science, and culture. It was the building of human society with or without religion at its centre.

Moral Decline of the Church



Black Plague

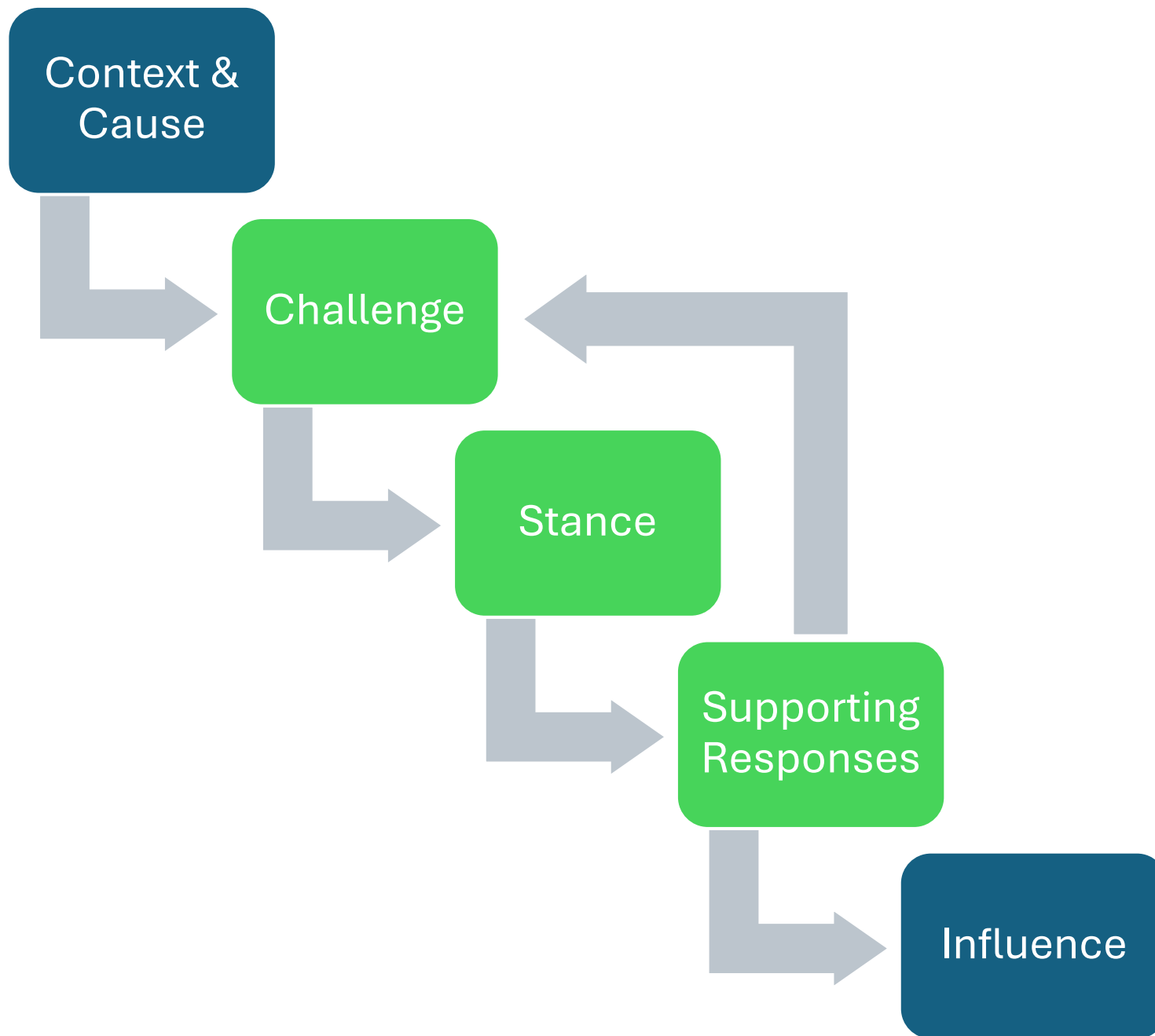
- The Black Plague in the 14th Century and beyond was particularly devastating for the Church with significant losses of the most virtuous priests. Their replacements were often open to corruption or lax practice.

Papal Schism

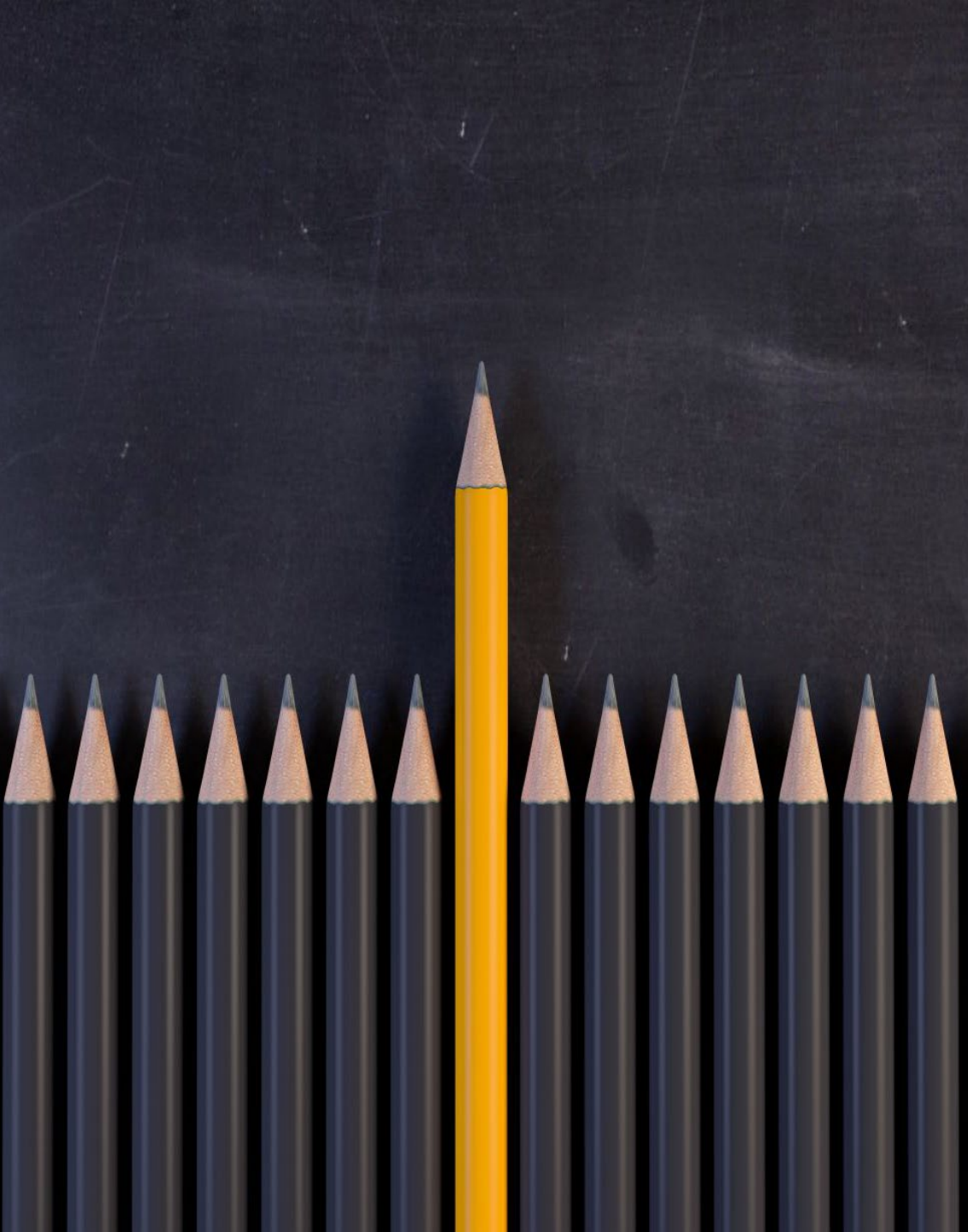
- Across the late 14th and early 15th Century the leadership of the Church was significantly weakened by schism with multiple claimants for the papacy (pope and anti-pope). As such, they relied on temporal powers

Renaissance Papacy

- In the later 15th and early 16th Century the papacy became so worldly that it lost almost all of its moral quality. Leo X was the pope in the lead up to the Reformation and spent the entire papal treasury, resorting to dubious methods to restore it (indulgences et al)







Initial or Short Term

- A Struggle between Martin Luther's call for change and the Church's resistance to change fuelled by societal forces seeking for division.
- Approximately 1517 – 1521
- 95 Theses
<https://www.luther.de/en/95thesen.html>

Spirit of division and discontent

- Many supporters of Luther may not have cared for precise arguments of theology but saw it as a chance to join for social causes
 - “many of his supporters were indifferent to theology and instead wanted to merge their own social discontent with the revolutionary spirit of the theologian” (Armenio, 2005)
 - “The princes of Germany had little in common with Luther’s religious sentiments. They did, however share in his rebelliousness towards the papacy. They saw in Luther’s new movement a way to free themselves from the pope and the Catholic emperor and to enrich themselves with expropriated Church lands” (Armenio, 2005)

95 Theses – some 'highlights'

“Any truly repentant Christian has a right to full remission” (36)

“The treasures of indulgences are nets with which one now fishes for the wealth of men” (66)

“Why does not the pope empty purgatory for the sake of holy love” (82)

Sale of Indulgences

“Any truly repentant Christian has a right to full remission“ (36)

“The treasures of indulgences are nets with which one now fishes for the wealth of men” (66)

“Why does not the pope empty purgatory for the sake of holy love” (82)

Rejection of authority

“I do not accept the authority of the popes or the councils” (Luther)

“Unless I am convinced by scripture and plain reason” (Luther)

“a 7 year-old child knows what the church is” (Luther)

Unorthodox theology

Sola Fide

Sola Gratia

Sola Scriptura

Church Stance



Ignornace

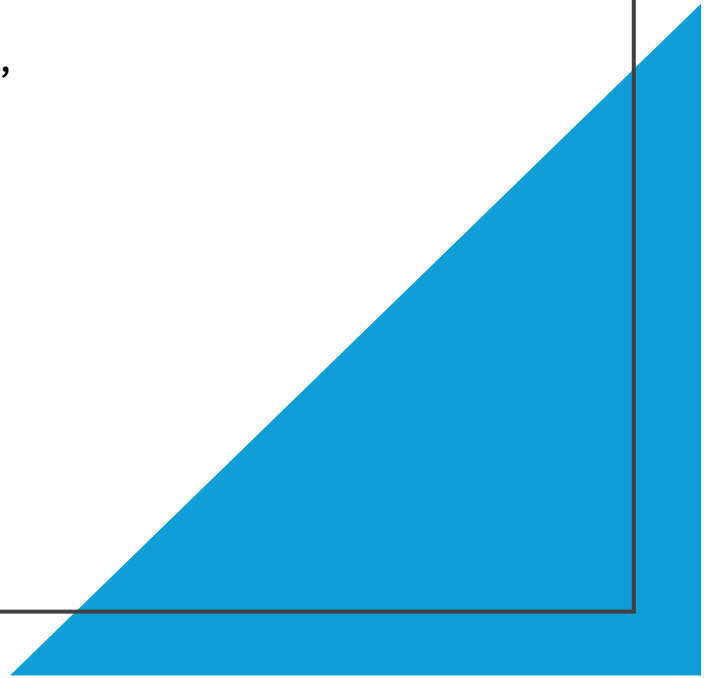
- Pope Leo X does not consider the possibility of division or schism a major issue. Leo X judges the whole situation to be a “quarrel among friars”
- Others in the Church, such as Thomas Cardinal Cajetan, reject Luther’s calls for reforms on the basis of papal authority. They were concerned with “issues of authority rather than precise statements of theological orthodoxy” (Scott Dixon)

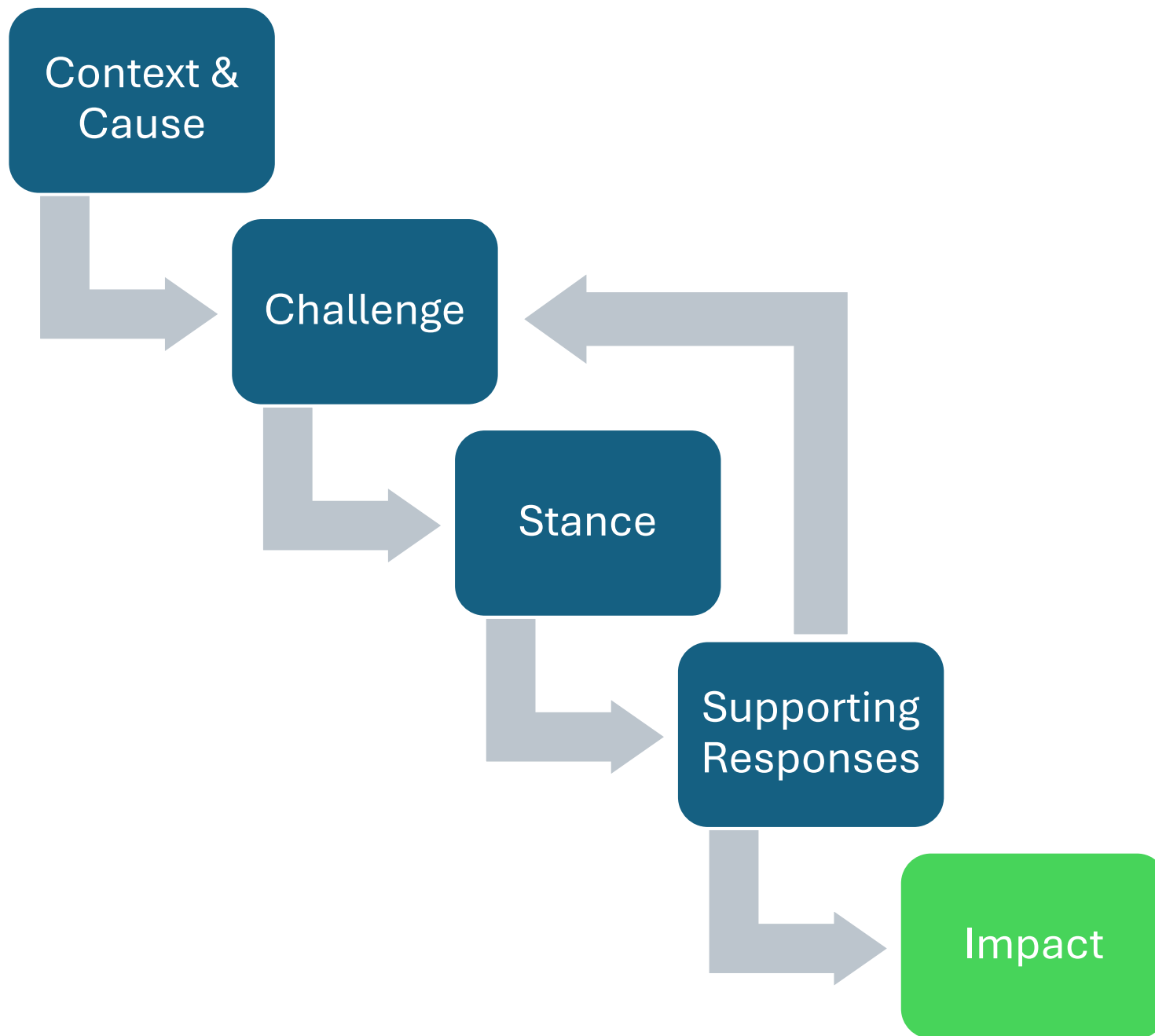
Rejection

Later on Pope Leo X **judged** the reformers to be heretics as they contradicted his authority as pope and officially rejected their works saying the Church should “reject completely the books and all the writings and sermons” of Martin Luther and other reformers (Exsurge Domine)

Supporting Responses

- Short sighted actions;
 - Ignorance of Luther
 - Letter from Cardinal Cajetan to Luther which was a “strong reprimand” (Armenio)
 - A meeting between Cardinal Cajetan and Luther in which the cardinal “instructed Luther, scolding him like a father” (Armenio)
 - The Leipzig debate with Johann Eck in 1519
 - The threat of excommunication in Exsurge Domine
 - Final excommunication and the Diet of Worms in 1521

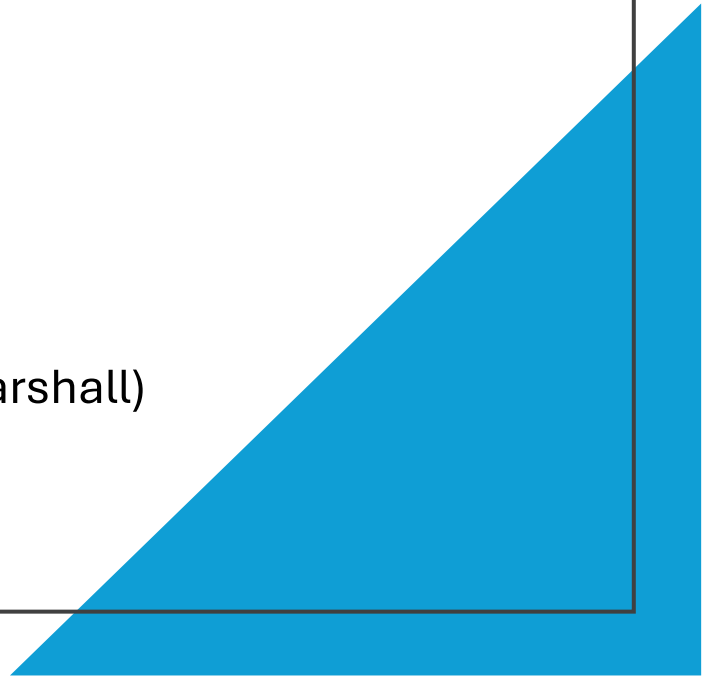




Influence on the Tradition and Challenge

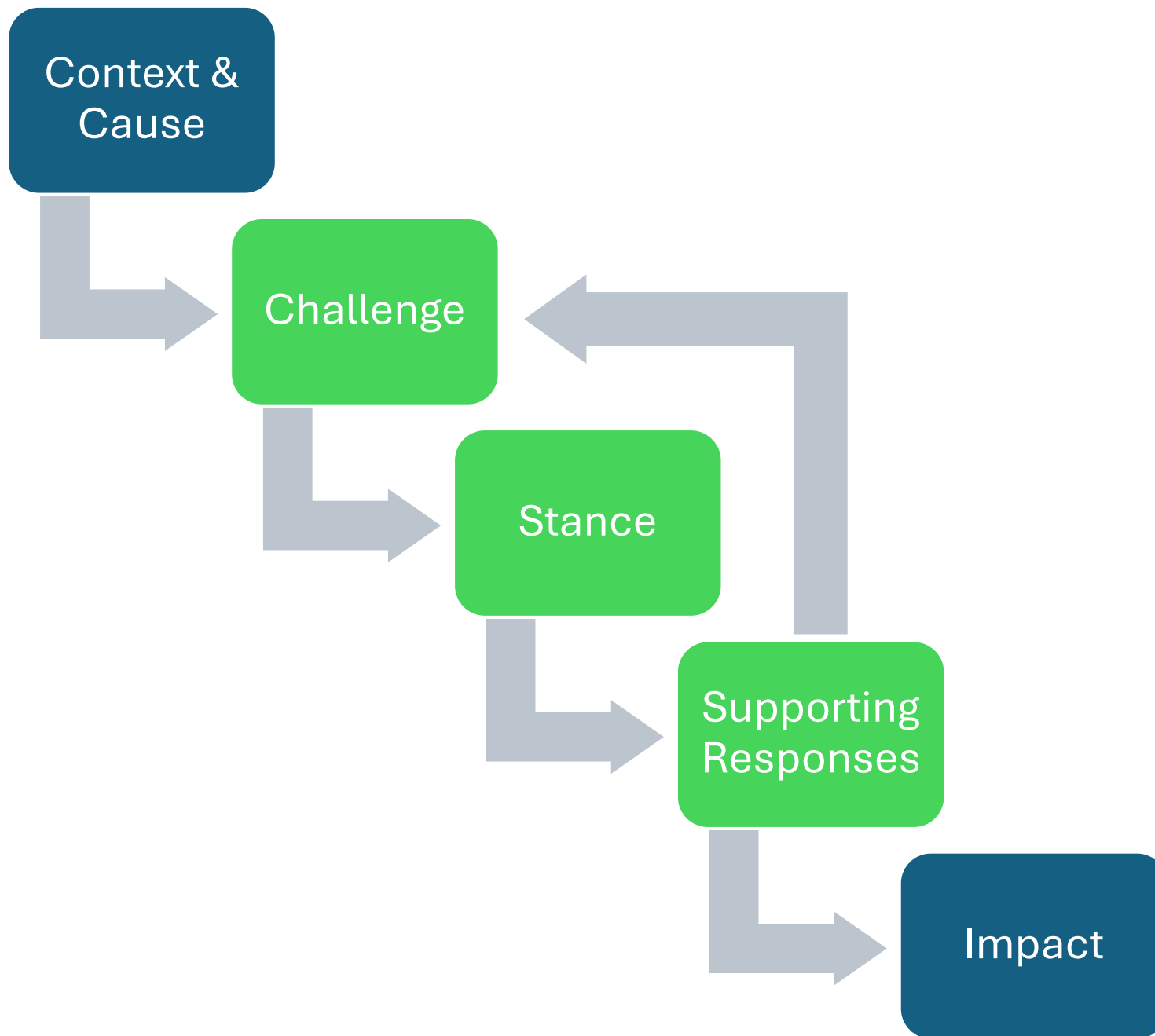
The excommunication and loss of Martin Luther led to significant losses in the Church.

- Multiple other reformers followed in Luther's path;
 - England - Church of England (Henry VIII)
 - Switzerland - Calvinist (John Calvin)
 - France - Huguenots
- Massive loss of adherents
 - "Germany was a disaster zone, perhaps 80% protestant" (Marshall)
 - Open rebellion against the Church





 The Religious Divisions of Europe, ca. 1555. Prior to 1520, all of Europe was Roman Catholic.



Middle of the 16th Century

- Growing Division;

- By the time the middle of the 16th Century arrives Catholicism is in relative tatters;

*The revival of the Catholic Church's fortunes is a remarkable, even a surprising story. In around 1560 it seemed the Protestant juggernaut was virtually unstoppable. **A northern arc of kingdoms – Sweden, Denmark, Scotland, England – were all lost**, and heresy was spreading like wildfire in the previously pious Catholic towns of France and the Netherlands. **Across swathes of Eastern Europe, Catholicism was becoming a minority religion**, and the Habsburg monarchy appeared unable to preserve the faith in its own backyard: most of the Austrian nobility became Protestant in the third quarter of the century. **Germany was a disaster zone, its population perhaps 80% Protestant**; the sole remaining Catholic state of any importance was the Duchy of Bavaria. Only in Catholicism's Mediterranean heartlands – Portugal, Spain, and Italy – had the authorities managed to snuff out the flame of Protestantism almost before it had caught light.*

-- Marshall, P. (2009)

Division -> “Distinct Catholicism”

- Division in the Church has well and truly set in.
- Multiple protestant denominations had been established and broken away
- Rejection and antagonism are not appropriate as even amongst Catholics there was sympathy for the Protestant reforms;
 - *Another reason for the slowness of the Catholic Church's response to the Protestant challenge was widespread sympathy, even among those who would remain Catholic, for many of the Reformer's criticisms of a more practical nature, while the seriousness of the doctrinal issues became fully apparent only gradually. (Tanner, 2014)*

Stances

- At this time the Church sees the loss of major parts of the Church as inevitable;
 - “reconciliation with the Lutherans... was never really on the agenda” (Marshall, 2009)
- The approach of the Church is foremost to protect itself from further damage and to create a Church which is distinctly Catholic and internally sound;
 - “The aspiration for a disciplined and educated priesthood was a cornerstone of Catholic reform.” (Marshall, 2009)

Supporting Responses

- The Church was still resisting the division by the middle of the 16th Century.
- Paul III convoked the Council of Trent. In his bull of indiction he blames the loss of major Catholic states on “our transgressions and the guilt of us all” (Paul III)
- Paul III laments that the Church had been brought to its knees, “afflicted almost to the despair of salvation” (Paul III)

The Council of Trent (1545 - 1563)

- The first session of the Council of Trent lays bare the purpose of the Council;
 - “the increase and exaltation of the Christian faith and religion;”
 - “for the extirpation of heresies;”
 - “for the peace and union of the Church;”
 - “for the reformation of the Christian clergy and people;”
 - “for the depression and extinction of the enemies of the Christian name”
 - (Council of Trent)

The Three D's of Trent

Doctrine

Discipline

Devotion

Doctrine

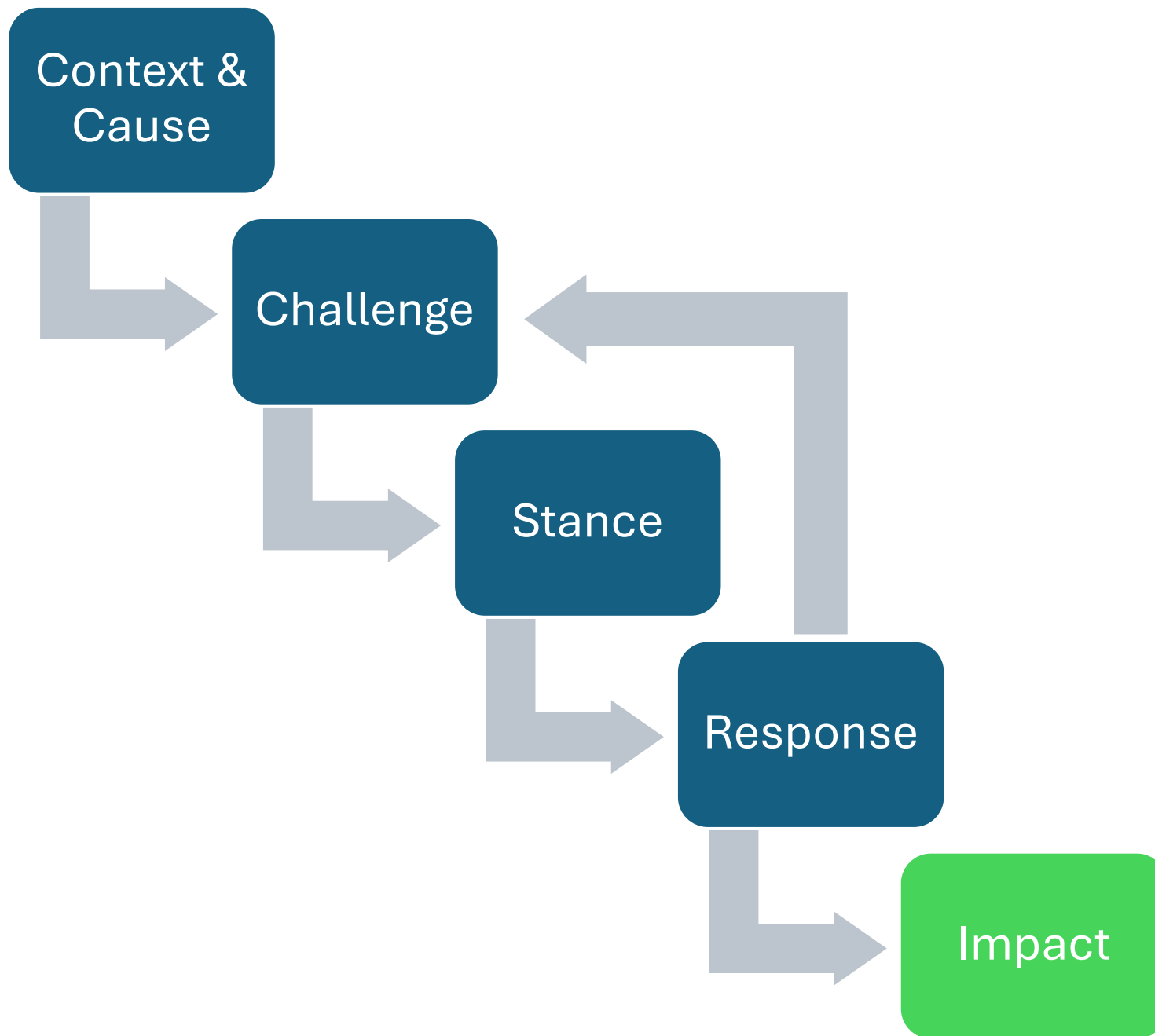
- The Council sought to reaffirm its beliefs and distinguish themselves from the Protestants.
 - Scripture and Tradition - both the scriptures and the teachings of the Church are authentic as they are both “preserved by unbroken succession” (Council of Trent)
 - Justification - Faith and Good works are necessary “If anyone says the free will of man... does not cooperate” in receiving grace “let them be anathema” (Council of Trent)
 - Sacraments - Distinctly seven “If anyone says... that there are more or less than seven” (Council of Trent)

Discipline

- There was significant corruption in the Church and lax attitude, the later sessions sought to address this;
 - Seminaries - Mandatory priestly training in each diocese in a seminary - “to train them in church discipline, in a college which the bishop shall choose” (Council of Trent)
 - Sale of indulgences - whilst the authority of the pope to issue indulgences was affirmed, the sale of indulgences was prohibited. The Church decreed “that all evil gains for the obtaining [of indulgences]... be entirely abolished” (Council of Trent).
 - Other abuses was outlawed - e.g. Absenteeism and pluralism, the Council ordered “that Prelates reside in their own Churches” (Council of Trent)

Devotion

- The Council sought to more tightly regulate Catholic life and worship to distinguish itself from the Protestants;
 - Marriage - Catholic marriage was formalized with the presence of a priest and witnesses necessary, and strictly enforcing monogamy. “ If any one contracts Marriage otherwise then in the presence of the Parish Priest and of Two or Three Witnesses, it comes to nothing.” (Council of Trent)
 - Mass - The celebration of the Mass was formalized and centralized, local customs and practices were phased out in favour of an official and more tightly regulated Mass. “The Mass shall not be celebrated everywhere in the Vulgar Tongue.” (Council of Trent)



Influence on the Tradition



Significant increase in the quality of the clergy because of the mandate that every diocese has a seminary for priestly training.



The Church is purified because of the abolition of abuses such as absenteeism, pluralism, and the sale of indulgences, leading to “vigorous renewal” (Armenio)



There was a significant rise in legalism in the Catholic Church because of the precise definitions of Trent and other documents such as the Roman Missal.

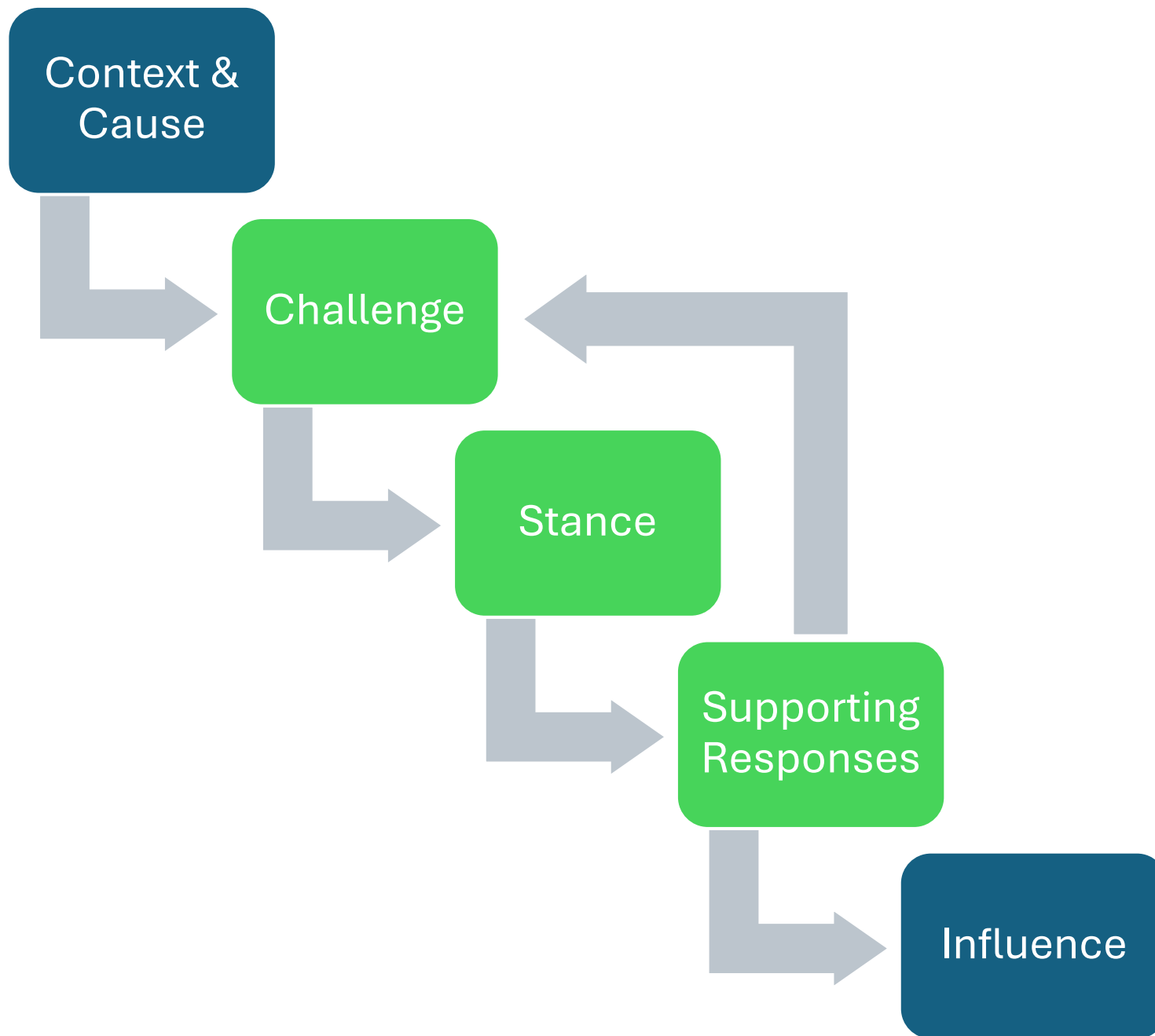


This also led to a loss of ritual diversity with local eucharistic rites banned in favour of the Latin celebration.

Influence on Society

The early years of Reformation were followed by significant conflict and violence in Europe. When the Church expelled the reformers and closed the door on reconciliation at the Council of Trent, a battle line is drawn over religious grounds.

- “Europe remained divided - a patchwork of Catholic and Protestant states” (Fiona MacDonald)
- Thirty Year War (1618 - 1648) - 8 million deaths, including famine and violence. Initially started on religious Protestant-Catholic divide before evolving into a widespread central European power struggle.



Ongoing Challenge

The division of the Church after the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century remains a challenge to the Church. Now the challenge is focused on how to bring about greater cooperation between the divided denominations, instead of protecting against further division.



How many divisions?

Thousands, tens of thousands?

How to face this separation now? (Stance)



Catholic Church's attitude on the division in the Church can be seen in modern documents, e.g. Vatican II. The very first sentence of Unitatis Redintegratio explains it precisely;

The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council.



The Church's language on other Christian denominations shifts to referring to them as "separated brethren" (Unitatis Redintegratio)



It sets union with Christian denominations as "the concern of the whole Church, faithful and shepherds alike." (Unitatis Redintegratio)

Attitudes towards the reformers (Stance)



Modern attitudes towards the reformers of the 16th century have also changed. Where Pope Leo X called Luther and the reformers a “wild boar” (Exsurge Domine) modern popes and bishops differ.

The German Bishops describe Luther as “a religious pathfinder, Gospel witness and teacher of the faith”

Pope Francis describes Luther’s intention “was to renew the Church, not divide Her”

Supporting Responses



Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, 1999.

2017, Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation

Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, 1966.

Pope Francis' multiple visits to other Christian denominations;

- Lutheran World Federation
- World Council of Churches

Influence on Society

Pope Francis' continued efforts in ecumenism have yielded positive relationships with other religious communities.

In 2015 a survey by Lifeway Research of 1000 Pastors in USA was conducted.

63% responded that they see Pope Francis as a genuine Christian brother.

42% value Pope Francis' opinion on theology.

<https://blog.lifeway.com/newsroom/2015/09/25/pope-francis-improves-protestant-pastors-views-of-catholic-church/>

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a black pen, filling out a bubble sheet. The sheet has a grid of circles, each containing a number from 1 to 4. Some circles are already filled with black ink. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the sheet and the hand.

Approaches to Examination Questions

Breadth vs Depth;

Approaches to Examination Questions

Breadth;

- Students who adopt a breadth approach to examination questions might find themselves spread too thin without great analysis.
- Some student responses that try to cover the entire gamut of the supporting responses from the Catholic Church risk being superficial.
- With a breadth approach there is a risk of storytelling.

Approaches to Examination Questions

Depth;

- Students who adopt a depth approach to examination questions tend to spend more time in analysis of the Reformation.
- Focusing on one period (short term, long term, modern) may lead to more insightful connections between elements. E.g. Response and impact
- With a depth approach there is opportunity for sophistication.

Exam Questions

- 2023 :

‘A challenge always has some effect on shaping a tradition’s future, even if it takes time for the effect to develop.’

Analyse to what extent this statement represents what happened in the significant challenge to a religious tradition or religious denomination that you have studied in detail. Use relevant sources to support your response



Exam Questions

- 2021

‘The stances and supporting responses taken by religious traditions to challenges are often seen as resisting change and defending the existing way in which the religion operates and understands itself.’

To what extent does the statement above reflect the aims of the stances and the supporting responses of a religious tradition or denomination to a challenge that you have studied in detail? Use relevant sources to support your response



Exam Question

- 2020

Question 4 (10 marks) Discuss how one significant challenge has influenced a religious tradition or denomination that you have studied. Use relevant sources to support your response.

