Church History 86:1 (March 2017), 33–62.
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doi:10.1017/S0009640717000506

# *Purity and Pollution in Protestant Ritual Ethics*

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*Purification of the Church is frequently invoked to narrate Protestant justifications for the break from Rome during the Reformation. It also functions to link the Reformation to a process of modern disenchantment. However, little attention has been paid to the rhetoric of pollution and precisely how the reformers articulated the dangers of polluted ritual. The historical location of the sources examined here is the middle decades of the 16th century when Protestants were dealing with political setbacks to the Reformation cause in the Holy Roman Empire, particularly the imposition of the Augsburg Interim by Charles V. This law was designed to find some middle ground between Catholics and Protestants until the schism would be settled at the Council of Trent. However, the debates about whether certain ceremonies, supposedly non-binding with respect to doctrinal commitments, could be used for politically expedient purposes, pushed Protestant thinkers to reassess the power and dangers of liturgical practices and paraphernalia. This article interprets the discourse of pollution in Protestant controversies about compromise in ritual matters by treating the responses of two theologians writing against the Interim from different parts of Germany: Joachim Westphal and Wolfgang Musculus. By laying out the causes of ritual pollution and its negative effects upon body and soul according to individuals who worked for reform in both their intellectual activity as well as their pastoral service, this article demonstrates the importance of ritual matters for Protestant moral thought.*

*"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one can"*

Job 14:4

## I. Introduction: Locating Pollution in the Protestant Imagination

Purification, as a trope, is at the center of both Protestant self-understanding and academic interpretations of the Reformation. In this context, it pertains to the idea that, by returning to the core message of

I received invaluable feedback for this article from Constance Furey, Amy Hollywood, Mark D. Jordan, David Lamberth, Adam Y. Stern, Travis Stevens, and Kirsten M. Wesselhoeft, all of whom I wish to thank here. Research for this article was conducted with the financial support of the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst and the Sinclair Kennedy Traveling Fellowship. I received valuable feedback for an early version of this paper from my fellow presenters and the audience during a session of the History of Christianity Unit at the American Academy of Religion's Annual Meeting in San Diego on November 22, 2014.

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https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640717000506 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the Gospel, long-abused traditions and ceremonies will be swept away. True confession of a sincere faith will thus supplant hypocritical or superstitious habits. For historians such as Scott Hendrix, the Reformation represents an effort at "recultivating the vineyard" in order to yield a purer, truer version of Christianity, while for scholars such as Webb Keane, this project of purification is representative of an essential leitmotif of modernity itself, which culminates in the valorization of the sovereign subject over and above dumb materiality or thoughtless repetition, signaling a culture of authenticity and sincerity.[1] Yet in order to consider the different implications of purified Christianity, one would benefit from a more precise examination of the representations of *im*purity that were prominent during the sixteenth century. By doing so, we may uncover not only the moral stakes of purity, but also locate its proper sites. What constituted pollution, and what were its dangers, according to Protestant sources? Answering this question is not without its difficulties. The image of the idolatrous pollution in the old church is so prevalent and expansive in Protestant controversy literature that it is easy to find oneself trapped in a circle: the old church was polluted by an idolatry that was caused by the accumulation of polluted human traditions. Replacing the adjective *polluted* with *Catholic* does not add much to our understanding of what was so dangerous about being Catholic, or being close to Catholic rites, for these thinkers.[2] Putting terms such as pollution and purification in quotation marks does not solve the problem either, but instead freezes the category and prevents the reader from gaining any conceptual traction.[3] Rather than settling with the conclusion that the motif of pollution is merely a pervasive cliché of the period, I propose to examine closely some key examples of the rhetoric of ritual pollution from the end of the first generation of the Reformation in order to argue that it does important work for articulating the boundaries of Protestant ritual space, as well as representing the importance of bodily practice for the Protestant communities. That is to say, the rhetoric of pollution reveals Protestant anxieties about the power of materials and practices, designated as Catholic, to suppress the truth of Christianity when they are inserted back into

[1]Scott Hendrix, *Recultivating the Vineyard: The Reformation Agendas of Christianization* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004); and Webb Keane, *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2007).

[2]Christian Grosse notes the lack of developed treatments of the rhetoric of pollution in his essay, "Places of Sanctification: The Liturgical Sacrality of Genevan Reformed Churches, 1535–1566," in *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Will Coster and Andrew Spicer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 61n3.

[3]Even some of the best scholarship is vague on the semantics of pollution. See for example Chris Elwood's discussion of the social implications of the Reformed Lord's Supper in *The Body Broken: The Calvinist Doctrine of the Eucharist and the Symbolization of Power in Sixteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 155.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640717000506 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Protestant spaces. Reformation intellectuals considered specific kinds of vestments and ritual paraphernalia as inseparable from their previous theological and devotional contexts. Ritual spaces and practices were vital for shaping the character and piety of Protestants, so therefore many Protestant intellectuals argued that changes to these material factors were a danger to the salvation of souls. In this way, material, moral, and ideological purity went together hand in hand. Furthermore, I demonstrate that Protestant controversialists from this period collapse the distinction between pollution and idolatry. In other words, they represent false doctrine as becoming materially embedded in specific bodies and practices. Unlike other forms of pollution that may be cleansed through processes or rituals or healing, idolatry leaves an indelible stain.

The authors I draw from were writing during a period of crisis in Europe for Protestants. Concerns about purity and pollution cut across confessional and doctrinal divisions and were manifest in numerous theological controversies of the mid-sixteenth century, including the Nicodemite, Interim, *adiaphora*, and vestment controversies. For the purposes of this article, I focus on the situation in the German lands, treating two important, but neglected sources: the writings of Lutheran controversialist Joachim Westphal from Hamburg and the Reformed scholar Wolfgang Musculus who wrote about southern Germany. Both of these Protestant intellectuals were responding to the grim prospect of enforced re-Catholicization through Charles V's Augsburg Interim, a religious settlement that brought back many traditional ritual observances while retaining some aspects of Lutheran theology.

Charles intended this to be a stopgap measure until a church-wide reform could be authorized at the Council of Trent, and its implementation in southern Germany was vigorously enforced.[4] For the churches of Saxony and northern Germany, the Interim was not taken up in its original form. Instead, the new elector, Maurice, and his courtiers pressured the theologians of Wittenberg and Leipzig to craft an adaptation of it that would satisfy the emperor's desire for liturgical and ecclesiastical unity.[5] The justification for the return of certain robes, candles, and consecrated oils and salts depended on the assumption that such matters were useful for imperial solidarity and

[4]The literature on this subject has grown considerably in the past decade. For an introduction, see *Das Interim 1548/50: Herrschaftskrise und Glaubenskonflikt*, ed. Luise Schorn-Schütte. (Gütersloh: Gütersloher, 2005). See Chris Elwood, *The Body Broken*, for an overview of the French situation.

[5]See Johannes Hermann, "Augsburg-Leipzig-Passau: das Leipziger Interim nach Akten des Landeshauptarchives Dresden 1547–1552," (Ph.D. diss., Karl-Marx-Universität Leipzig, 1962); Simon Ißleib, "Das Interim in Sachsen 1548–1552," in *Aufsätze und Beiträge zu Kurfürst Moritz von Sachsen (1877—1907)* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1989), 1:531–574; Günther Wartenberg, "Philipp Melanchthon und die sächsisch-albertinische Interimspolitik," *Lutherjahrbuch* 55 (1988): 60–82.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640717000506 Published online by Cambridge University Press

discipline in Protestant communities, without affecting Protestant theological commitments. The shorthand they used to express this was the Greek word *adiaphora*, translated as things that make no difference.[6] However, many Protestant theologians were suspicious of this rationale and the return of these abolished traditions, regarding any sort of compromise with the Catholics in ritual as an abomination. In their critiques of the Interim liturgies, both Westphal and Musculus stood outside of the law, at odds with political regimes that looked to religious and secular ceremonies as means for performing unity and metabolizing conflict.[7] However it was the means of producing imperial unity that were precisely the problem for the theologians concerned with pure worship. Their complaint was not simply that papal teaching was flawed, but also that it somehow remained congealed in the materials and practices that were now supposed to guarantee imperial stability. But how could material forms prompt such anxiety among the self-avowed enemies of superstition? How did donning vestments or spectating the papal Mass contaminate the Protestant soul? What would result from this pernicious contact?

## II. Scholarly Narratives of Purification in the Reformation

It is tempting to describe Protestant anxieties around the re-Catholicization of worship as a reaction to attempts at the "re-enchantment of the world." Their critiques would thus fit within the framework suggested by sociologists, philosophers, and historians who argue that the Reformations were seminal for secularization in the West. This argument about rationalization remains the most influential paradigm for explaining the cultural transformations of the Reformation. Following in the footsteps of Max Weber and Keith Thomas, the sociologist Philip Gorski identified three key indicators for rationalization from this period: the valorization of the ethical as opposed to the magical, the individual as opposed to the communal, and the intellectual as opposed to the ritualistic.[8] For cultural historians and anthropologists, rationalization also instituted a form of semiotic purification: the divine, the

[6]*A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed., s.v. "ἀδιαφορέω."

[7]Hans Joachim Berbig, "Zur rechtlichen Relevanz von Ritus und Zeremoniell im romisch-deutschen Imperium," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte Stuttgart* 92, series 4, no. 30 (1981): 204–249; Rudolf Hoke, "Ein theologisches Gutachten von staatsrechtlicher Tragweite," in *Ex Aequo Et Bono: Willibald M. Plöchl Zum 70 Geburtstag: Forschungen Zur Rechts-Und Kulturgeschichte*, ed. Willibald M. Plöchl, Peter Leisching, Franz Pototschnig, and Richard Potz (Innsbruck: Universitätsverlag Wagner, 1977), 107–117.

[8]Philip S. Gorski, "Historicizing the Secularization Debate: Church, State, and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe, ca. 1300 to 1700," *American Sociological Review* 65, no. 1 (Feb. 2000): 148–149. See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (London: Routledge, 1992); Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic:*

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transcendent, was barred from mingling with the material.[9] According to this line of thinking, rituals, art, and liturgical space become signs that point to, rather than encompass, the sacred. This purification of worship operates according to what Webb Keane labels a "semiotic ideology" that went on to influence how Christian converts under colonial regimes understood and participated in "Christian modernity." The key feature of these accounts of Protestant purification was the hierarchy of doctrine over practice, symbol over presence, representing the notion that ritual acts are simply an expression of religious attitudes and beliefs, the transmission of information rather than a form of life. Antique and medieval notions of bodily purity had been sublimated in favor of a model of purity that kept the sacred away from any form of material contagion. In spite of the drive for absolute purification, the inevitable materiality of Protestant culture frustrated this impulse, even as it sought to inculcate values such as "modernity," "Christianity," "spirituality," or autonomy" through particular relationships to immanence, embodiment, and historical contingency.[10]

For scholars of Lutheran ritual and liturgical art, disenchantment and the purification of church ceremonies contributed to the production of the modern subject of social discipline. For example, in *The Reformation of the Image*, Leo Joseph Koerner links Luther's quest for pure religion to the instrumentalization of Christian practice for the sake of stabilizing the social hierarchy. Because the divine needed to be kept clear of human contamination, Luther's sense of divine purity was "so absolute that it needed to remain hidden."[11] The elimination of the previous representatives of the divine, the Catholic sacerdotal system, created a void in ecclesiastical administration that led to the sanctification of secular power (princes serving as "emergency bishops") or, conversely, the secularization of the Church.[12] This, in turn, resulted in secular hierarchies being reproduced and re-enforced in Lutheran liturgical art and church architecture.[13] According to this interpretation, the urge to purify Christianity yielded a secularization and confessionalization that made religious worship a schematic representation of social power structures and thus a pedagogical tool for discipline. Susan

*Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[9]Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 163–201; Keane, *Christian Moderns*, 1–34, 196–222.

[10]Ibid., 80, 223–254.

[11]Koerner, *The Reformation of the Image* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 416–418.

[12]Ibid., 418.

[13]Ibid., 379, 420.

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Karant-Nunn offers a similar assessment of the efforts to purify the churches and return them to their pristine origins: "In attempting to apply sacral principles to all aspects of creaturely existence, they [the reformers] ran the risk of rendering the sacred so diffuse that it could easily dissipate in the emerging capitalist and rationalist atmosphere."[14] According to her analysis, the purification of miraculous materials and apotropaic customs from the lives of Protestants left them stranded and helpless before an unapproachable God, all the while straining under the yoke of social discipline created by the emergent absolutist state.[15] For both Karant-Nunn and Koerner, the cleansing of the old rituals thus made Protestant religion too rarified, depriving it of its unique substance and relevance and either replacing it with authoritarian political content or simply causing it to "dissipate."

Narratives of rationalization and disenchantment have recently been subjected to critical scrutiny by scholars interested in treating discourses and practices of the supernatural as something more than cultural detritus being swept along by the waves of progress.[16] Nonetheless, the metanarrative of purification persists in the literature at least in part because it corresponds with the "rites of destruction" attested to in the sources as the means of cleansing the churches.[17] Yet the rhetoric of purification is not exclusively a narrative trope, but also pertains to theological persuasion. That is to say, purity and pollution do not only function as motifs in a large-scale story of change, but also possessed an immediacy and urgency for the lives of Christians in the sixteenth century. I argue that addressing the situational demands of ritual purity for Protestants provides us with a more nuanced understanding of the different functions of this metaphor than relying on the "subtraction story" of purification that pervades the literature.[18] Moreover, a close investigation of the rhetoric of these interventions reveals the heightened importance of embodied and material elements when considering confessional and ritual purity, a point that should invite scholars to reassess the rationalization paradigm, especially insofar as it argues for the

[14]Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Ritual: An Interpretation of Early Modern Germany* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1997), 201.

[15]Ibid., 191–192.

[16]Robert W. Scribner, "The Reformation, Popular Magic, and the 'Disenchantment of the World,'" *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23, no. 3 (Winter 1993): 475–494; Alexandra Walsham, "The Reformation and 'The Disenchantment of the World' Reassessed," *The Historical Journal* 51, no. 2 (2008): 497–528.

[17]Sergiusz Michalski, *The Reformation and the Visual Arts: The Protestant Image Question in Western and Eastern Europe* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 75–98; Koerner, *The Reformation of the Image*, 83–103.

[18]The phrase comes from Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 26.

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disembodiment of Christian experience and worship.[19] The point for Protestants of a plurality of confessions was not that "pure religion" downgraded the material aspects of religion, but, instead, demanded specific conduct with respect to what one did with one's body both inside and outside spaces of worship. Indeed, Luther's concept of "the priesthood of all believers" seems to have prompted a concern for physical as well as doctrinal purity among his followers and colleagues, a concern I term "ritual ethics." Instead of undergoing particular ritual purifications in various seasons or stages of life, the physical purity of the Christian now entailed making a space from settings, persons, and practices that embodied idolatry.

For the sources I deal with here, being present at or in proximity to Catholic rites represents a pernicious form of contact. Participation in ceremonies, whether in positive or negative situations, incorporated the subject into a larger, collective spiritual and social body, the Church or the "Synagogue of the Antichrist."[20] It was no mistake that a favorite proof text for the defenders of Evangelical ritual purity was the image, shared between the Gospels and the Pauline letters, of a bit of leaven contaminating the dough, as in Galatians 5:9. These different intellectuals emphasized, nonetheless, different senses of pollution, which I take to be paradigmatic for this way of thinking about ritual in the Reformation. The first expresses how Catholic ritual pollutes Evangelical religion, while the second pertains to the effects of this pollution:

1. Ceremonies invented by humans "cover up" the Gospel by citing and instantiating alternative theologies, all of which distort the experience and meaning of worship.[21]
2. Pollution of the body through inappropriate cultic action disturbs its proper harmony with the soul, a harmony that is essential for the

[19]An important example of this trend is Jean Delumeau's *Catholicism Between Luther and Voltaire: A New View of the Counter-Reformation*, trans. Jeremy Moiser (London: Burns and Oates, 1977), 175–202. A more recent representative would be an essay by Thomas Lentes, "Andacht und Gebärde: Das religiöse Ausdrucksverhalten," *Kulturelle Reformation: Sinnformationen im Umbruch*, ed. Berhard Jussen and Craig Koslofsky (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1999), 29–68.

[20]Nicholas Amsdorf, *Daß nie nöter gewest ist wider den Römischen Antichrist zu schreiben. . . .* (Magdeburg: Michael Lotter, 1551), A iij/v, http://gateway-bayern.de/VD16+A+2348. Amsdorf relies on this anti-Judaic and anti-Semitic rhetoric to cast doubt upon the prospect of ritual compromises with the Catholics.

[21]One important mode of pollution that I have do not have the space to take on in this article pertains to the notion that the enactment of anachronistic observances would prompt a reversion to an outdated, or pernicious, form of religion. The logic here is supersessionist with respect to perceived Jewish elements surviving in Christian worship. This is then applied analogously to the traditions of late medieval Latin Christianity. I refer to an example of this rhetoric below in the case of John Hooper's argument against vestments. See John Henry Primus, *The Vestments Controversy: An Historical Study of the Earliest Tensions Within the Church of England in the Reigns of Edward VI and Elizabeth*. (Ph.D. diss., University of Amsterdam, 1960).

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Evangelical virtue of sincerity in professing and living out one's confession.

Protestant discussions and debates about idolatry-pollution prompted difficult political and ethical decisions. If worship among confessional others was not simply different but dangerous, this influenced where and how one could live as an early modern Christian. Moreover, for the controversialists of the age, one's stance toward ritual also revealed something essential about the solidity and sincerity of one's character—they considered dissimulation or even a willingness to compromise as markers of inconstancy and betrayal of the Gospel. In the pages that follow, I unpack the notions and images of pollution on display in the works of two theologians writing about compromise in rituals. First, I use Joachim Westphal's writings against pseudo-*adiaphora* to explain how idolatrous theologies became congealed onto ceremonial objects and gestures. Second, I turn to Wolfgang Musculus's dialogue *Proscaerus* to show the moral dangers of worshipping in polluted ritual spaces during the Interim. Taken together, these examples demonstrate the particular sixteenth-century usage of ritual pollution as directed toward ceremonial practices and objects that materialized rival theologies and thereby interrupted and adulterated Protestant worship. This particular recourse to the ancient biblical rhetoric of pollution functions for the historically particular purpose of representing and solidifying confessional differences at the end of the first generation of the Reformation.[22]

## III. Idolatrous Attachments to Ritual in the Writing of Joachim Westphal

Joachim Westphal was a Lutheran controversialist who wrote to secure what he considered to be Luther's authentic theological legacy against threats posed by the Interim, compromises in *adiaphora*, and Reformed interpretations of the Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper. Especially in his critique of ceremonial compromises, Westphal shows himself to be the true theorist of ritual among the Lutheran dissidents, providing sophisticated explanations about the dangers of returning to traditional observances. In his tracts and sermons, he concentrates on how ceremonies and ceremonial objects bear traces of older scenes of idolatry, which enables them to "block out" the

[22]For a discussion of how apocalyptic tropes, of which idolatry-pollution is but one example, impacted the violent aspects of culture and politics during confessionalization, see Heinz Schilling, "Die Konfessionalisierung im Reich: Religiöser und gesellschaftlicher Wandel in Deutschland zwischen 1555 und 1620," *Historische Zeitschrift*, Band 246, Heft 1 (February 1988): 41.

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Gospel. Their polluting influence stems from two related causes: "pseudo-*adiaphora*" are instituted by idolaters and are thus embedded with false theologies. Both their human origin and erroneous theological content become disruptively present through ritual materials and gestures.

Westphal, the son of a master joiner, was born in Hamburg in 1510. As a youth, he studied at the Latin school in Luneburg and received a scholarship from his community in order to earn his Master of Arts degree from Wittenberg. Westphal's path as a minister and intellectual was defined by this stipend, for it obliged him to turn down a professorship at the University of Rostock in order to serve as a pastor at St. Catherine's Church in Hamburg.[23] Thus, we see his intellectual energy poured into controversies that dealt with the impact of specific rituals on the souls of worshippers, especially the Eucharist.[24] The Augsburg Interim and its subsequent Saxon adaptation called for the reintroduction of priestly vestments, consecrated oils and salts, and the recitation of a set of Eucharistic prayers rejected by most Protestants, known as the Canon of the Mass.[25] For Protestant intellectuals like Westphal and Musculus, who had both spent much of their careers involved in the revision and practice of worship, these requirements struck a nerve. Accepting them would do violence not only to the edifice of the liturgy, but to the practitioners, the community, and divinity itself.

Westphal's participation in the critique of the Interim and its rituals began with an open letter to the professors of Wittenberg written on April 3, 1549, co-authored with other Protestant clerics working in Hamburg.[26] Westphal recycled certain motifs and arguments from the letter, especially the image of the abrogated rituals bearing "idolatrous attachments," in works that were subsequently published under his own name. Thus, although the letter was signed simply "the Hamburg Pastors," it seems probable that he played a significant role in the letter's composition. At the start of their letter, the Pastors

[23]Irene Dingel, "Westphal, Joachim," *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, ed. Gerhard Müller (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 35:712–715; Derek Visser, "Westphal, Joachim," *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, ed. Hans J. Hillerbrand (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 4:268.

[24]See Irene Dingel, "Calvin in the Context of Lutheran Consolidation," *Reformation & Renaissance Review* 12, no. 2–3 (2010): 161–168; Andrew Pettegree, "The London Exile Community and the Second Sacramentarian Controversy, 1553–1560," *Archiv Für Reformationsgeschichte* 78, no. 1 (December 1987): 223–252.

[25]The Canon is compromised of the verses 'Te igitur,' 'Memento [vivorum,]' 'Communicantes,' 'Hanc Igitur,' 'Quam Oblationem,' 'Qui Pridie,' 'Unde de memores,' 'Supra Quae,' 'Supplices Te Rogamus,' 'Memento [defunctorum],' 'Nobis Quoque Peccatoribus,' and 'Per Quem Haec Omnia.' See *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church,* s.v. "Canon of the Mass."

[26]For the authorship and biographies of all of possible contributors from Hamburg, see "De rebus adiaphoris epistola—Einleitung," in *Der Adiaphoristische Streit (1548–1560)*, ed. Irene Dingel, Jan Martin Lies, and Hans-Otto Schneider (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2012), 43–59. For the observation on the seminal quality of this letter, see Reimund B. Sdzuj, *Adiaphorie und Kunst: Studien zur Genealogie ästhetischen Denkens* (Tübingen: Max Niedermeyer, 2005), 140.

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acknowledge the challenges faced by figures such as Melanchthon following the defeat of imperial Protestant politics in the Schmalkaldic war, yet they press the teachers of Wittenberg to secure Luther's legacy by making an open statement about what sorts of adiaphoric ceremonies were to be tolerated and which had to be rejected.[27] Up to this point, the only sources of knowledge about Wittenberg's stance had been rumors and leaked documents, all of which hinted at serious changes to Protestant liturgical practices in order to safeguard Saxony from the threat of imperial invasion.[28] The letter thus sought to initiate an open discussion about the use and abuse of ceremonies.

The letter of the Hamburg Pastors is notable for first articulating the basic premises and arguments of those Lutheran intellectuals who dissented against Saxon adaptations of the imperial Interim, even if that dissent is most closely associated with the city of Magdeburg and the controversialists who wrote there including Matthias Flacius, Nicholas von Amsdorf, and Nicholas Gallus.[29] These included the assertion that there are practices that are not commanded in the Bible but which may be used for edifying the community and structuring worship, which the letter identifies as "true *adiaphora*."[30] The examples of these listed include the exclusion of women from giving instruction in the churches [1 Corinthians 14:34–35], setting aside certain days or times of day for prayer, the use of bells to summon churchgoers, "sober and solemn festivals" for the proclamation of God's word, suitable vestments for clergy, the use of the vernacular or Latin according to the needs of the congregation, the playing of organs for musical accompaniment, and the retention of images in the churches that are helpful for recalling sacred history.[31] The Pastors assert that these practices have been diligently purified of "all superstitions and errors," though they do not go into detail about what this purification entailed.[32]

The Pastors contrast these "true *adiaphora*" with the false, which fall into two categories: adiaphoric practices that used to be beneficial but have

[27]Their letter and Melanchthon's response appear in *Philippi Melanthonis Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia* (hereafter cited as *CR 7*), ed. Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider and Heinrich Ernst Bindseil, (Halle: C. A. Schwetschke, 1840), 7:366–386. For the need for a clear appraisal from Wittenberg, see *CR* 7, 369.

[28]Ibid., 369.

[29]For a treatment of Magdeburg's "Chancery of God" in English, see Nathan B. Rein, *The Chancery of God: Protestant Print, Polemic, and Propaganda Against the Empire, Magdeburg, 1546–1551* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008). For the relevant German scholarship, see Thomas Kaufman, *Das Ende Der Reformation: Magdeburgs "Herrgotts Kanzlei" (1548–1551/2)* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); and Anja Moritz, *Interim und Apokalypse: Die religiösen Vereinheitlichungsversuche Karls V. Im Spiegel der magdeburgischen Publizistik 1548–1551/52* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).

[30]*CR* 7, 372.

[31]Ibid., 372–373.

[32]Ibid., 373.

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become superstitious, and practices the Pastors designate as the arbitrary, human-invented forms of worship and sanctification.[33] With regard to the former, the letter articulates a principle that would be cited again and again, up to the constitution of Lutheran confessional norms at the end of the century, that is, the claim that elements that are "truly *adiaphora*" can shift over to the domain of "impiety" whenever they promote scandal instead of edification. The Pastors state it in the following way: "*adiaphora*, in the true sense, are bound by certain limits, and if these are transgressed, they cease to be *adiaphora*, and become corrupt, profane things that disseminate superstition, ensnare consciences, and provide opportunities for the reintroduction of the old abuses and impiety."[34] Although somewhat vague with regard to the particular "limits" that bind adiaphoric observances, this statement represents the earliest articulation of why compromise in *adiaphora* was dangerous in "times of confession," one that was taken up by Flacius and the rest of the opponents of the Saxon politics of ritual.[35] In the months following the publication of the letter, Westphal would continue working to clarify the nature of these limits on human-invented observances in Christian worship.

The Pastors' letter was less a thorough treatment of the subject, and more a plea for the illustrious teachers of Wittenberg to issue their own judgment regarding compromise in ceremonies. At the same time, the Pastors attempted to goad their old teachers toward their particular position, warning of the dangers to Luther's legacy and the entire project of the Reformation.[36] Working in the churches and witnessing firsthand the salutary effects of the reformed liturgy, their letter expresses what they fear will transpire if "servitude in *adiaphora*" is too readily born.[37] They were particularly concerned about the old rituals disrupting the pedagogical and pastoral aspect of worship for the flock. They perceived the old cult as being saturated with inane gestures and overly-spectacular decoration which "obscure the mysteries of the sacraments that belong to the true worship of

[33]The word used by the Pastors is a Greek term from the New Testament, ἐθελοθρησχεία (Col. 2:23), or will-worship (*CR* 7, 377).

[34]*CR* 7, 373–374. "Adiaphora autem, quae vere sic vocantur, inclusa sunt certis finibus, quos, si transgrediuntur, Adiaphora esse desinunt, fiuntque corruptelae, profantiones, seminaria superstitionis, conscientiarum laquei et aptae occasiones reducendi veterem abusum et impietatem."

[35]At the start of his most extensive treatment of the controversy, Flacius uses a condensed formulation of the principle enunciated in the open letter as his "rule" for the entire work. See *Liber de veris et falsis adiaphoris, in quo integre propemodum adiaphorica controversia explicatur* (Magdeburg: Michael Lotter, 1549) *1/v, http://gateway-bayern.de/VD16+F+1444.

[36]*CR* 7, 367–368.

[37]Ibid., 369. Here, the Pastors reference Melanchthon's explanation to the ministers in Frankfurt am Main from January 29, 1549 about bearing servitude in adiaphoric matters to avoid graver dangers (*CR* 7, 321–326).

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God."[38] Exaggerated spectacles with lighted candles and processions decreased the seriousness of participating in the rituals and thereby promoted what the letter names an "Epicurean" disdain for all religion. Contempt for the teachings of Christianity goes hand in hand with the "disorder" [ἀταξία] of the pre-Reformation cult.[39]

It is important to note the moral peril of corrupt ritual expressed in this letter. Not only are all idolatrous cults the invention of evil or misguided human beings, but those who advocate for them as a political and ecclesiastical panacea during the Interim show themselves to be "a worse plague than the Pseudo-prophets ever were."[40] This is a very strong claim, and it suggests that there is something especially tempting and insidious behind the proposal to settle in liturgical matters, as though there were some all-too-human obsession with inventing and participating in extravagant rites.[41] This links to the way in which the letter attempts to pressure Melanchthon and the other professors of Wittenberg to acknowledge their moral responsibility as the stewards of Luther's reformation. Remaining silent on this issue would further divide the Protestant movement and plant seeds of doubt in the minds of the common people.[42] A firm and clear teaching on the question of human ceremonies was the only way to keep the "seeds and sinews of superstition" from taking root in the Church.[43]

Melanchthon answered the letter promptly on April 16, 1549, but refused to admit that any dangerous alterations to the liturgy had occurred in Wittenberg. He also declined to enter into a detailed debate about the boundaries between true and false *adiaphora*. Instead, he pointed to the dangers of war and the destruction of the churches should the emperor be provoked by Protestant stubbornness.[44] This answer was not particularly convincing for thinkers

[38]Ibid., 374.
[39]Ibid.
[40]Ibid., 367.
[41]See Melanchthon's theorization of this problem in his oration on the ages of the Church, *CR* 11, 784–785.
[42]This problem of the ethical stakes of ritual has direct bearing on the stated purpose of the letter, which is to demand a clear statement on the legitimate use of *adiaphora* by Melanchthon and the other professors of Wittenberg. Because of their silence on the matter, theologians and pastors of ill-repute among the Lutherans such as Johann Agricola, the court preacher of Brandenburg, had spread rumors that the Wittenbergers were willing to accept the changes in worship prescribed by the Augsburg Interim (*CR* 7, 292–296). Agricola was one of the authors of the Interim, and thus had a vested interest in its success. The Hamburg Pastors also express their suspicion against the character and motives of the courtiers of Dresden, the new power center in electoral Saxony, whose sympathies were more humanist-Catholic than Protestant, and who were more interested in appeasing the emperor in order to secure political gain than preserving the fruits of the Reformation. Melanchthon himself acknowledged this danger posed by the courtiers (Ibid., 232–234).
[43]Ibid., 375.
[44]Ibid., 384–385.

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such as Westphal who worried about the apocalyptic implications of ritual compromise with the Catholic Church.[45]

In order to bolster the case for rejecting these compromises, Westphal would go on to author several works dedicated to the abuse and corruption of *adiaphora*, works I see as seminal for the development of Protestant ritual ethics at the dawn of confessionalization. Even the controversialist most often associated with the critique of the Interim, Matthias Flacius, acknowledged his debt to Westphal.[46] Part of the correspondence between Westphal and Flacius is still extant, and one letter from November 22, 1549 shows Flacius pressuring Westphal to meet a deadline for the press at Magdeburg, a sure sign that his contributions were especially valued.[47] Here, I treat the piece in which he is most explicit about the causes and effects of polluted ceremonies, his *Two Writings*.[48] In this short treatise, Westphal argues that the material minutiae of human culture should not be overlooked on account of their trifling appearance, but must also be scrutinized for the histories, contexts, and intentions embedded in them, all of which are capable of being reactivated in specific circumstances. In this way, he provided a justification for opposing compromise in adiaphoric ceremonies.

Westphal introduced the topic of "pseudo-*adiaphora*" by examining a persistent excuse employed by the proponents of compromise in adiaphoric ritual: that this whole controversy revolves around nothing but trifles.[49] To create strife over such minuscule details was thus represented as being the sign of overzealousness and even betrayal of the true religion.[50] Westphal's aim in his first essay is to undercut such a complaint by dividing the category of "unimportant matters" in two, comprised of 1) things that are essentially unimportant, and 2) things that appear trifling when considered apart from their context.[51] When approaching the conditions of this second sub-category, Westphal argues that when attention is paid to the founders, circumstances, and goals of a given practice, it becomes clear that "from out of trifling things, great and important things emerge."[52] This, I would argue, is his way of

[45]See Kaufman, *Das Ende der Reformation*, 464–474.

[46]Reimund B. Sdzuj, *Adiaphorie und Kunst,* 140. Sdzuj cites his source as Flacius, *Bericht . . . von etlichen Artikeln der christlichen Lehr* (Jena: Thomas Rebart, 1559) E i/r–E i/v.

[47]B*riefsammlung des Hamburgischen Superintendenten Joachim Westphal aus den Jahren 1530 bis 1575*, ed. C. H. W. Sillem (Hamburg: Lucas Gräfe and Sillem, 1903), 1:96.

[48]Joachim Westphal, *Duo Scripta M. Ioachimi Westphal Hamburg* (Magdeburg: Michael Lotter, 1549), http://gateway-bayern.de/VD16+W+2304. Translated into German as *Zwo Schrifften M. Joachimi Westphali, Pfarherrn zu Hamburg* (Magdeburg: Christian Rödinger, 1550), http://gateway-bayern.de/VD16+W+2307. Here I use the Latin edition (hereafter cited as *Duo Scripta*).

[49]*Duo Scripta,* A 3/r.

[50]Ibid., A 2/v.

[51]Ibid., A 3/r–A 3/v.

[52]Ibid., A 4/r–A 4/v: "Longe alia est rerum natura, cum per se absolute, et e diuerso, cum per comparationem seu relationem considerantur. Alia item est oratio de rebus consideratis in se, et

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working out the boundaries between true and false *adiaphora*, a point which went unstated in the open letter to Melanchthon. Thus, an important limitation on the alteration of the liturgy is the historical situation, in this case, the recent military defeat of the Schmalkaldic League in a war that Westphal understood to be motivated chiefly by religious aims followed by the promulgation of a religious law for imperial unity, the Interim.[53] From the point of view of his opponents, the theologians of Wittenberg and the Saxon courtiers, the emperor's demands pertain to minutiae, "mere ceremonies," and not the substance of doctrine or the sacraments.[54] Yet Westphal wanted his readers to scrutinize the intention behind these impositions: "it is not just some whim on the part of the high potentates, but rather it is done wholly in earnest . . . when it comes to ceremonies, they magnify the most insignificant into the most excellent, since they take it all to be for the sake of the divine services."[55] Westphal did not presuppose that the Catholics were deliberately bent on destroying the true religion, but instead were convinced that their ritual practices were essential to true worship, hence their willingness to fight a war to "reform" the German churches anew. In a masterful reversal, Westphal accuses the compromisers of actually insulting the Catholic emperor by not taking his understanding of religion seriously.[56]

After imploring his readers not to underestimate the imperial reforms, Westphal begins to unveil the dangers hidden within them. The ceremonies prescribed by the Interim were tainted by the intentions of the imperial conquerors, who had made re-Catholicization a matter of imperial policy. They were all the more dangerous because of the high social standing of those who sought their re-establishment and their power to make these ceremonies into the law of the land.[57] Westphal's thinking on this point connects him to Luther's anxieties about liturgical compromise during the Diet of Augsburg in 1530, when the reformer attempted to dissuade Melanchthon from ceding too much to the Catholics in matters of ritual. In his letter, he argues against Melanchthon's suggestion that certain traditional practices, abolished during the reform of the liturgy, could work for the

in relatione ad aliud. Mutant enim naturam et conditionem rerum minutißimarum circumstantiae et relationes, quae accedunt. Saepe accessoria ex paruis magna faciunt."

[53]For the dissidents' perspective on the Schmalkaldic War, see Anja Moritz, *Interim und Apocalypse*, 102–108, 211–234.

[54]*Duo Scripta*, A 6/r.

[55]Ibid.: "Non tantum autem, quae nostri eleuant et tanquam leuia abijuciunt, magna censentur summorum hominum consilijs contentione, adfectatione, sed etiam eorundem opinione, iudicio, et existimatione. In caeremonijs uel minima magnifaciunt, Habent enim pro diuinis cultibus omnia, abgrogatis uel imminutis caermonijs, putant cultum Dei abrogatum et imminutum."

[56]Ibid., A 5/r–A 5/v.

[57]Ibid., A 6/r.

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purpose of instilling piety, claiming that it is the efficient cause instead of the final end that determines the essence of a form of worship. This means the person who institutes an observance assigns it its fundamental nature.[58] This formulation had a decisive consequence, dividing the biblical sacraments from any other cultic practice on the basis of their having been instituted by God. Anyone can claim their invented traditions are beneficial for piety, but the only way to be sure is to determine whether God has instituted and commanded it. Any other additions to the cult are observances invented by human beings, who are the mere playthings of the devil.[59] In the same vein, Westphal pushes his readers to test the character of the person or persons seeking changes in Protestant ritual. The personhood of the inventor counts the most when determining whether a given practice or object belongs in Protestant ritual space. However in this context, the concept of the efficient cause is further complicated by the fact that it applies not only to the institutor of a given practice, but also to whoever repurposes it, in this case, princes and bishops who serve the Antichrist. In other words, the efficient cause also pertains to the person who commands an observance. Thus, Christian praxis is extremely vulnerable to idolatrous pollution through the abuses of rogue agents.

The problem of taint does not only depend on the intent behind the liturgical compromises, but also upon the beliefs that are "attached" to those ceremonies. A plausible interpretation of Westphal's preoccupation with these "associations" would be that they are psychological, pertaining to the laity's experiences of pre-Reformation rituals. The disposition of the flock was a live issue for dissidents such as Westphal, yet instead of focusing only on subjective experience, he explained that the dangers that reside in the practices and materials are the objects of that experience.[60] For Westphal, idolatrous beliefs and desires persisted as accretions embedded in the materials and gestures of old rituals. Westphal frequently uses terms such "circumstances," "additions," or "attachments" to present the false-teachings as entities that had latched onto the ceremonies.[61] Through this bond,

[58]*D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (*Briefwechsel)*, ed. J. F. K. Knaake and Otto Clemen (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1934), 5:527.

[59]This test does not mean that Luther did not recognize adiaphoric elements of worship. His point about institution pertains to the way a practice is not only created, but also commanded. In the same letter, he acknowledges that there are many elements of worship that are accidents, that is, particular to a given community. He goes on to argue that these are not included in the divine words of institution, therefore they cannot be mandated or considered essential to Christian practice (ibid., 526).

[60]For the importance of experience as a source of authority in this period, see Thomas Kaufman, "'Erfahrungsmuster' in der frühen Reformation," *Historische Zeitschrift*, Beiheft 31 (2001): 281–306.

[61]"Accidenta" used in *Duo Scripta*, A 3/v; "additamenta" used in ibid., A 4/v; "appendices" used in ibid., A 6/v.

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pseudo-*adiaphora* function as props to secure superstition a spot in the cultic setting.[62] This indicates that the problem does not only pertain to the psychology of worship, but also to the conservation of a purified liturgical domain in material terms.[63]

Westphal writes of the "superstitions attached to the ceremonies" as the emperor's chief motivation for imposing the old observances.[64] How are we to understand this notion of "attachment"? How do certain beliefs become congealed to materials and gestures and why can certain rituals be cleansed of superstition while others cannot? For instance, Westphal denies that practices and objects commanded by the Interim can be purified of their previous associations, despite the assurances from Melanchthon and his colleagues that the "corrupted" segments of the ritual prayers have been cleansed.[65] Yet in the letter discussed above, he and his co-authors claim that traditional songs and even memorials to the saints have been cleansed of idolatry and superstition in their churches.[66] Is he holding Melanchthon and other Protestants of a more conciliatory disposition to a double standard?

Much of the problem revolved around a lack of trust in Melanchthon as well as the new political leaders of Saxony. If they were simply carrying out the project of the Interim, then the changes they were proposing were tainted by the effective cause, as laid out above. Beyond that, Westphal and the other Lutheran dissidents feared that the designation of *adiaphoron* was being used in bad faith to cover up idolatrous observances for the sake of political concord. Such observances included prayers and gestures of consecration for the Mass and ritual objects, including salts and oils, practices that never were and never could be located within the limits of true *adiaphora*.[67] Westphal

[62]Ibid., A 6/v: "Adminiculua superstitionum et idolatriae."

[63]Scholarship on the Reformation has recently begun to employ the category of sacred space to conceptualize the impact of reforms on the lived experience of Christianity. See *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Coster and Spicer. For a valuable case study on changing concepts of sacred space in a site of worship controlled by different confessions at different points in history, see Philip Hahn, "Sensing Sacred Space: Ulm Minster, the Reformation, and Parishioners' Sensory Perception, c. 1470 to 1640." *Archiv Für Reformationsgeschichte* 105, no. 1 (January 2014): 55–91.

[64]*Duo Scripta*, A 6/v: "Postulant autem superstitiosi non tantum recipi et obseuari caermonias, sed etiam superstitiones caeremonijs annexas, sicut ipsi obseruant sua sacra, ita ab alijs obseruari mandant, si aliter obseruentur, sine opinione cultus, et meriti, perinde id habebunt, ac si non obseruentur, nec ferent publicam doctrinam et confessionem repugnantem impijs appendicibus, quae caermonias contaminant idolatria."

[65]Ibid., C 3/r–C 3/v [sic: In the original edition there is typo that repeats C2 for C3]: "Siquidem utcunque uerbis et promißis, literis et syllabis repurgentur Caeremoniae a suis sordibus, tamen reuehunt damnatas superstitionies et errors. Non dubium est, plaerosq; ritus, cum primum instituterentur fuisse experts et incontaminatos a superstitionibus, tamen progressu temporis contaminatos esse peßimis additamentis."

[66]*CR* 7, 373.

[67]Ibid., 377. These *impia* are the "will-worship" [ἐθελοθρησχεία] mentioned above in note 22. It is worth noting that many of them are instances of speech acts such as vows and consecrations.

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grappled with how those impious practices interact with the otherwise adiaphoric physical objects and gestures that make up their context, for example, clerical vestments customarily worn by the priest performing the Mass. The idolatry embedded in these observances depends upon specific associations and accretions that develop over time instead of anything intrinsic to the practices or materials themselves. Theoretically, in the beginning, these ceremonies and ritual paraphernalia were used for edification, yet their continued proximity to idolatrous prayers and teachings[68] rendered them polluted and unsuitable for Protestant sacred space.[69] This suggests that for Westphal, pollution is multivalent, communicable between linguistic, material realms, and psychic realms.[70] It also marks a genuine intellectual difference with Melanchthon, who understood the pollution of idolatry to be constrained to the language of doctrine.[71] When Westphal makes the claim about these so-called *adiaphora* being the seeds and sinews of superstition, he means that they cannot reappear in Protestant ritual space without dragging along the idolatrous consecrations and connotations. Specifically in a time of imperial re-Catholicization, these objects became vectors for Catholic theology. Even if they go unsaid, the presence of the pseudo-*adiaphora* implies the validity and effectiveness of Catholic theological claims. Thus the "attachments and appendices" are substantial insofar as idolatrous impurity sullies the structure of worship, its language, the space, the materials, and finally, the souls of those who participate.

For Westphal, the material conditions of worship are bound up with the community's theology, and this in turn impacts the subjective experience of religion on the part of practitioners. Thus one reason given by the opponents of compromise in *adiaphora* was that churchgoers would be scandalized by the reversion to abolished practices and accordingly lose faith in the Reformation.[72] Dissidents such as Westphal frequently represented this problem through images of material congestion that showed the reintroduction of old ceremonies as blocking out the transmission of the

[68]The most important examples are the prayers that make up the Canon of the Mass. Consult note 21 above.

[69]*Duo Scripta*, C 3/r–C 3/v. See the explanation for the dangers of "human ceremonies" according to the Magdeburg Centuriators in *Sexta Centuria Ecclesiasticae Historiae* (Basel: Johann Oporinus, 1562), 6, http://www.mgh-bibliothek.de/cgi-bin/cent06.pl?Spalte=1.

[70]For an analogous point with regard to the metaphor of plague, see Colin Jones, "Plague and its metaphors in early modern France," *Representations* 53 (Winter 1996): 112.

[71]An example of Melanchthon's orientation toward the pollution of corrupted theological language comes in his debate with Bishop Julius Pflug about the Canon of the Mass just before the outbreak of the *adiaphora* controversy (*CR* 7, 234–247). See Oliver K. Olson (*Matthias Flacius and the Survival of Luther's Reform* [Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002], 123) who writes that "Melanchthon was convinced that by preventing the use of the Eucharistic prayer he had saved the Reformation."

[72]*Duo Scripta*, A 7/r. See Flacius, *Liber de veris et falsis adiaphoris,* E 3/r.

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Gospel promise of free grace, or in his words, "darkening and suppressing" the power and dignity of the true sacraments.[73] According to this line of reasoning, superfluous ceremonies are like layers of grime covering up the engraved caption beneath a venerable monument. Westphal writes that the dignity of the original sacramental signs would be obscured by a crowd of "human ceremonies," that the "sacred seals would be mixed together with human traditions, which in short time would cover up the promises of God . . . whence the seals receive the power and dignity of sacraments."[74] If the true sacraments are blotted out through a plethora of other observances, then the divine promise of salvation which has been impressed upon these forms of worship is squeezed out of the Church as a physical site and as an institution. Thus, there appears to be two senses of pollution at work here: the physical attachment of idolatrous doctrines to the material elements of ritual, and then the way in which these material elements clutter Protestant ritual space and thereby disrupt the flow of sacred energy.

This question about the theological "attachments" of old liturgical practices was not peculiar to Westphal or the *adiaphora* controversy. Having recently fled to England from Strasbourg on account of the Interim, Martin Bucer argued against a position very similar to Westphal's. The context was the controversy around John Hooper's refusal to don priestly vestments during the ceremony for his promotion to the bishop of Gloucester.[75] Bucer expressed his concern that the whole project of reforming the Church of England would be sidetracked by Hooper's zeal. He compared the attack on vestments to focusing on the "the external Amalek," or the mere "insignias of the Antichrist," at the expense of the "whole Amalek," or the true "body of the Antichrist," or its "filthy intestines," that is, covert Catholic clerics still loyal to Rome who retained power in the dioceses, as well as ignorance and impiety among the English in general.[76] Even if liturgical matters adorn the body of the celebrant, Bucer denied them any major connection to the essential spiritual body of the Antichrist. He also asserted, against Hooper, that priestly vestments need not persist in their previous symbolic function as a pre-figuration of Christ's sacrifice;[77] they may be repurposed by a reformed church and used to inspire

[73]*Duo* Scripta, B 2/r.

[74]Ibid.: "Reiecti dignitas baptismi et sacrae coenae, turba caeremoniarum plurimum est obscurata, nec tamen pericula mouent, quo minus denuo admisceantur sacrosanctis signis traditiones humanae, quae breui tempore iterum obruant promißiones Dei, signis annexas, unde uirtus et dignitats Sacramentorum pendent."

[75]Primus, *The Vestments Controversy*, 3–16.

[76]Bucer, "Bucer's Letter to à Lasco, October 20th (?), 1550" in *Martin Bucer and the English Reformation*, ed. Constantin Hopf (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), 152–153, 156; Primus, *The Vestments Controversy*, 53.

[77]Constantin Hopf, "Hooper's 'Notes' to the King's Council 3 October 1550," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 44, no. 175–176 (July-October 1943): 198: "Atque idem manifeste docet

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respect among the common people.[78] Nor do they retain any of the corruption referred to by Westphal, as Bucer's ally Peter Martyr stated: "I do not persuade myself, that the wickedness of the papacy is so great, that it renders whatever it touches altogether defiled and polluted, so as not possibly to be given to virtuous and godly men for a holy use."[79] Bucer argued similarly in his correspondence with Jan Łaski: the physical elements of the liturgy are corrupt only when they "hang together with Antichristianity and in its profession," and thus "none of the marks of Antichristianity are capable of adhering in things" when they are used in a different theological context.[80] Bucer's diction with respect to "hanging together with" and "adhering to" reveal that he was thinking in the same terms of Westphal's "attachments," while drawing the exact opposite conclusion about their negative impact.

Bucer's pragmatic concept of reform clashes with the valorization of purity on display across the texts I have examined. For such thinkers as Westphal, the devil is very much in the details: "if we don't wish to lose what's great, it will be necessary to oppose these changes in their beginnings, and thus to conserve what's small, so that the great is not snatched away with the small. And so on account of what's greater it will be necessary to fight on account of the very smallest things."[81] This argument shows how important the physical elements of worship could become for the reformers, since these elements appear in their writings as the connecting tissues that bind doctrines and communities. With this in mind, I turn to representations of the negative consequences of impure ceremonies for the Protestant subject.

## IV. Musculus: Social and Psychological Disintegration through Ritual Pollution

Protestants who remained in Catholic lands in the sixteenth century faced some grim choices: exile, martyrdom, or outward submission to the old church. As a French representative of the Reformed in the 1540s, John Calvin offered his

Aaronis sacerdotium, in Christi sacerdotio esse abolitum. Hebr. 7. 8. 9. 10. cum omnibus suis ritibus, vestibus, rasionibus, vnctionibus, Consecrationibus, et similibus."

[78]Bucer, *Martin Bucer and the English Reformation*, 155.

[79]Primus, *The Vestments Controversy*, 58.

[80]"Iam aliquid esse notam Antichristi, in nulla inest re in hoc enim nullae res conditae sunt a Deo: Sed pendet totum a consensu atque in Antichristianismum, et eius professione: quo consensu quaque professione commutatis consensu ac professione Christianismi, nihil potest in rebus ipsis haerere notae Antichristianismi."

[81]*Duo Scripta,* A 6/r: "Quod si magna amittere nolumus, necesse erit principijs obstare, et conseuare parua, ne maga cum paruis eripiantur, et propter maijora pro minimis retinednis pugnare necesse erit."

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640717000506 Published online by Cambridge University Press

perspective on matters of dissimulation in ritual. In the texts he wrote concerning crypto-Protestants who still participated in Catholic ritual life, known as "Nicodemites,"[82] Calvin rejected all forms of ritual dissimulation and gathered the opinions of other Evangelical intellectuals to bolster his authority.[83] Rather than dissimulate, Calvin advised embattled Nicodemites to flee their native lands and settle where the Gospel was proclaimed.[84] The moral vocabulary of purity, sincerity, and steadfastness that Calvin developed as a foil to cowardice, submission, and dissimulation was taken up by theologians who faced the prospects of re-Catholicization after the defeat of the Schmalkaldic League. One example is the pastor and biblical scholar Wolfgang Musculus, who, having been the preacher at the Church of the Holy Spirit in Augsburg from 1531 to 1548, was obliged to abandon the city as a result of its capitulation to the emperor and the subsequent implementation of the Interim.

Born in Dieuze in what is now the French administrative region of Alsace-Champagne-Ardenne-Lorraine, Musculus was the son of a cooper and possessed talents in music and language. He entered the Benedictine convent at Lixheim when he was fifteen years old. By 1518, he was reading Luther's writings. Musculus left the convent in 1527 and relocated to Strasbourg, where he learned Hebrew and studied under Martin Bucer and Wolfgang Capito. In 1531, Musculus accepted a call to succeed Urbanus Rhegius as the preacher at the Church of the Holy Cross in Augsburg and later became the cathedral preacher of this important center of trade. During the process of negotiating the Wittenberg Concord (1536), Musculus made the long journey to Wittenberg and reported on the persistence of Catholic remnants in the Protestant worship in Saxony in his travel journal.[85] Between 1540 and 1541, Musculus participated in colloquies at Worms and Regensburg between Protestants and Catholics. With the implementation of the Augsburg Interim, Musculus was forced to flee Augsburg with his family. By this point, he had become an important biblical commentator and translator of Greek patristic sources into Latin. He moved across Switzerland from Basel to St. Gallen and Zurich, finally settling in Bern, where he spent the rest of his life as a professor at the local university. In addition to philologically in-depth commentaries on the Psalms and the Gospel of John, Musculus

[82]See Carlos Eire, *The War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (New York: Cambridge, 1986), 235–258; as well as Eire, "Calvin and Nicodemism: A Reappraisal," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 10, no. 1 (Spring 1979): 44–69.

[83]"Appendices ad libellos de vitandis superstitionibus," in *Omnia Opera*, ed. Edouard Cunitz, Johann-Wilhelm Baum, and Eduard Wilhelm Eugen Reuss (Brunswick: C. A. Schwetschke, 1867) 6:617–644.

[84]Ibid., 629.

[85]Henning Reinhardt, "Das Itinerar Des Wolfgang Musculus (1536)," *Archiv Für Reformationsgeschichte* 97, no. 1 (December 2006): 50–51.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640717000506 Published online by Cambridge University Press

contributed to the development of Reformed dogmatics by producing his own *Loci Communes*, which would be reprinted across western Europe.[86]

An irenic presence in the middle years of the Reformation, Musculus was drawn into the controversies involving ritual and sincerity that Calvin initiated when he responded to the so-called Nicodemites as well as the Interim-era conciliators. However, in a key source, he innovated by linking the discussion of Nicodemism to the imperial situation in the German lands during the Interim.[87] Musculus did not write to refute a particular historical actor or text. Rather, he constructed a dialogue, entitled *Proscaerus*, in order to model the debates and exemplary characters of Christians making their way through a bewildering situation.[88]

*Proscaerus* was named for the central anti-hero of this long dialogue, the paradigm of the worldly would-be Protestant, who attempts to wall off his public, bodily persona from his inner convictions, while at the same time seeking relief for a guilty conscience.[89] In the dramatic frame imagined by Musculus, Proscaerus represents the situation of a prosperous young Nicodemite living in an unnamed city which has recently been subjected to Catholic "reeducation." His position is especially tenuous, for his faith is no secret—for twenty years, he has taken part in the new movement with enthusiasm. Under the Interim, he has much to lose: wealth, the safety of his family, and his very life. The dialogue does not dismiss these concerns through recourse to the radical ethic of self-sacrifice expressed by the theologians of Magdeburg. Nor does it put forward Calvin's preferred solution: exile, even if this was the option Musculus himself opted for. Instead, it affirms communal solidarity, while simultaneously admonishing

[86]Rudolf Dellsperger, "Leben und Werk," in *Wolfgang Musculus (1497–1563) und die oberdeutsche Reformation*, ed. Rudolf Dellsperger, Rudolf Freudenberger, and Wolfgang Weber (Berlin: Akadamie Verlag, 1997). See Reinhard Bodenmann, *Wolfgang Musculus (1497–1563): destin d'un audodidacte lorrain au siècle des Réformes* (Geneva: Droz, 2000).

[87]For a list of vernacular translations, consult "Druckverzeichnis des Wolfgang Musculus," in *Wolfgang Musculus*, ed. Dellsperger, Freudenberger, and Weber, 395–398.

[88]Originally published under the pseudonym Eutychius Myo. *Proscaerus: Liceat ne homini Christiano, euangelicae doctrinae gnaro, papisticis superstitionibus ac falsis cultibus externa societate commnicare. Dialogi quatuor* (Basle: Jakob Kündig, 1549), http://gateway-bayern.de/VD16+M+7299. The pseudonym refers to the character of Eutychius from Acts 20:7–12, a young boy who falls asleep in a window sill listening to Paul's discourse, falls, and sustains what seems to be a life-threatening injury. The biblical text implies that Paul heals the boy, without spelling this out literally. This image of falling asleep, injury, and healing may be read as encapsulating the drama experienced by those who remained in Augsburg and were tempted to choose dissimulation in ritual matters, experienced doubt and despair, like Proscaerus, and were revived by authentic Christian fellowship and teaching.

[89]*Proscaerus*, A 5/r. Musculus explains in his introductory epistle that the name of this character is a Latinized form of the Greek word for "temporizers," which appears in Matthew 13 (A 2/v). The German rendering of the "temporizer" is *Wetterhahn*, the weathercock that blows with the wind.

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its readers to beware of the contaminated communion with idolatrous ceremonies.

Catholic observances are unambiguously the source of pollution in the dialogue. However, what is more interesting are their adverse effects. Dissimulation prompts a bipolar reaction on the part of the conscience: despair, self-contempt, dull complacency, and the "blindness" of the soul, with rapid-fire transitions between the two poles of terror and stupefaction. In terms of its communal impact, dissimulation in ritual matters fosters a culture of hypocrisy and thereby prevents authentic communion, which for Musculus encompasses collective worship as well as frank conversation. Not only is the individual's soul vulnerable to demonic temptations, but he also leads others down the same path.[90] Consequently, ritual dissimulation is the cause of disassociation at the micro and macro levels.

Proscaerus brings his problems to an authentic Evangelical, Eusebius, not in order to repent, but more to test out arguments that legitimate his participation in Catholic cultic life. At the same time, his conscience is genuinely wracked by guilt, "wounded" by this turn back to the old ways.[91] As first, he voices his insecurities to another citizen, the antipode of Eusebius, the appropriately named Asebius, who balks at the idea of taking religion seriously at all, especially when it risks tearing members away from the security of the body politic.[92] Unsatisfied by the cold confidence of Asebius, Proscaerus flags down Eusebius to ask him whether communion among idolaters is licit.

Eusebius presses Proscaerus to describe the state of his conscience while he is present for these rituals. Proscaerus reports that it caused him pain and even warned him vehemently that he was disobeying God and affirming idolatry; he worries that he will become "completely blind" to this peril through habituation. Nevertheless, he acknowledges to Eusebius that his qualms are beginning to fade.[93] Taken aback, his interlocutor notes that this new feeling is exactly the object of his earlier fear, the realization of which sends Proscaerus into despair.[94] Asebius departs from their company, disgusted by the exchange, and promising to commend Eusebius to the local magistrate, which Proscaerus interprets as a mocking euphemism for notifying the authorities about their conversation.[95] The remaining characters are thus in peril because of their participation in the kind of communion Musculus

[90]Ibid., D 6/r–D 6/v.
[91]Ibid., A 6/v and B 1/r.
[92]Ibid., A 8/v. Asebius is the Latinized substantive form of the Greek word ἀσέβεια, ungodliness or impiety, in direct opposition to εὐσέβεια, that is, reverence or piety toward gods and parents. *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed., s.v. "ἀσέβεια."
[93]Ibid., B 4/v.
[94]Ibid., B 5/r.
[95]Ibid., B 6/r–B 6/v.

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presents as beneficial, a meeting in which the dangers of illicit ritual communion are laid bare.

In the second dialogue, Proscaerus insists on a fundamental division between act and intention, the body and the soul, ceremony and theology, to explain his conduct under the Interim. Proscaerus lays out his rationale for communion in externals among Catholics in the following ways. He names two forms of being in communion with a group: the first is sharing in the same teachings, beliefs, and emotions of the group in question. The other is being in communion through mutual participation in a given "external" rite.[96] Proscaerus wishes to locate the authentic site of idolatry in the ideology, spirit, and affect of the subject, while offering external communion through ceremony as a benign instrument of social cohesion and civil obedience.[97] Similar to the authors of the Augsburg Interim, and even to the later philosophical defenses of absolutism in Hobbes and Spinoza, this view takes the "outward" forms of religion to be under the exclusive authority of the political sovereign, functioning for the sake of social coherence.[98] Without denying that religious communion is vital for social coherence, Eusebius presents a contrasting position. Religious communion comes in three forms: through participation in the rites and instruction of pure Christianity, adiaphoric practices, and idolatry.[99] Moreover, whenever the adiaphoric practices are imposed by tyranny and made legally binding, they shift into the pernicious form of communion, a point in common with the critiques of the Interim and compromise in ceremonies by Westphal and other dissident Lutherans writing in Hamburg and Magdeburg.[100]

For Proscaerus, contamination would only take place were he to believe in the salvific power of the illicit ceremonies. From the perspective of his interlocutor, insincere participation is neither licit nor safe for the soul. When Eusebius hears Proscaerus's attempt to bifurcate the concept of communion, he asks him whether he would tolerate being in companionship with thieves, murderers, and prostitutes.[101] Proscaerus denies that he could ever be

[96]Ibid., C 4/r: "Vnum, quo in ipsa sententia, siue illa uera sit, siue falsa, deinde & eodem affectu & spiritu: alterum, quo externo tantum opere ac ritu communicatur."

[97]Ibid., C 4/r.

[98]Philippe Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual: Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton, 2001), 164–202; Nathan Rein, *Chancery of God: Protestant Print, Polemic, and Propaganda Against the Empire, Magdeburg, 1546–1551* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 106–107. See Asebius's remarks on A 8/r–A 8/v.

[99]Ibid., C 1/r–C 1/v. For the importance of ritual life in the formation of the Christian subject, see *Proscaerus,* E 7/v. A clue we have as to what Musculus considered to be the ideal form of communal worship and Christian pedagogy comes in his account of the singing of vernacular songs among his congregation at Augsburg. See Dellsberger, "Leben und Werk," in *Wolfgang Musculus*, ed. Dellsperger, Freudenberger, and Weber, 33.

[100]*Proscaerus*, C 2/r.

[101]Ibid., C 4/v.

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compelled to belong to such a group. Eusebius points out that Proscaerus remains steadfast when it comes to what is commanded by the second tablet of the Law, but when it comes to the first, he is indifferent, which is to say, he favors the divine statutes regarding one's duty to the neighbor while neglecting those that pertain to the worship of God.[102] Even if both tablets are sacred, Eusebius's complaint indicates the hierarchy of divine matters over civil. Indeed, the latter depends upon the former. Yet Proscaerus denies that he violates the precepts of the first tablet, precisely because he does not hold to the opinions or spirit of the papists. He also implies that it is possible to retain a social link with idolaters in a way that is distinct from being one among thieves and adulterers. In a similar way, he denies that he is in the same moral position as Shadrach, Meschach, and Abednego from Daniel 3, who refused to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's idol. Proscaerus admits that he would have sinned, had he worshipped Nebuchadnezzar's idol, yet at the same time, he asserts that what he does during Catholic services is not the same sort of practice of adoration.[103] Eusebius responds that Proscaerus has not so far been able to articulate the nature of the distinction, and thus his argument about the two forms of communion does not stand up to the example from Daniel. Having put Proscaerus on the defensive, Eusebius pushes harder on the importance of harmony between one's doctrine and conduct, quoting Romans 14:23: "Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin." He asserts that because Proscaerus involves himself in a cult without putting any stock in its efficacy or theological significance, he is condemning himself before God.[104]

One of the unique features of Musculus's dialogue is that he appears to take the reasoning of those who would compromise or dissimulate in ritual matters seriously. Proscaerus is not simply a straw man; he is capable of effectively countering the pious Eusebius. When the latter cites the passage from Romans, his interlocutor inspects the passage and notes that one of its most important messages is to not judge others in things that are irrelevant to faith. Proscaerus points out that so far, their argument has not pertained to adiaphoric matters, the very topic of Paul's discussion in Romans 14, but rather to supposedly illicit practices.[105] Since he does not approve of the Catholic form of worship, he does not enter substantive, spiritual communion with them, and thus he does nothing illicit. Accordingly, the

[102]Ibid.
[103]Ibid., C 5/v: "Quia illic gentilis erat adoranda statua, hic uero iuxta quorundam sententiam aliud habetur adorationis genus."
[104]Ibid., C 5/v–C 6/r.
[105]Ibid., C 6/r.

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passage in question does not provoke any guilt.[106] In other words, he has not been completely satisfied that anything binds him to sin that does not originate from his sincere, personal views. The fact that he is outwardly in communion with others who hold to the sanctity of Catholic ritual is irrelevant to him and God.

Despite Proscaerus's accurate observation about the literal meaning of the passage from Romans, Eusebius shows that what is most important in this situation is being able to reason from the principle set down in scripture. This speaks to the thesis of the article: texts and ideas cause either pollution or purity; ideas have physical effects and even leave a trace on the body. Given that one should be held culpable for abusing useful things, Eusebius infers that the situation is all the more critical in the use of illicit things: "Thus in the abuse of medicine, something that is per se good and harmless becomes harmful due to bad use, and then what should we say if someone seizes upon poison? If the use of medicine is able to become harmful, certainly how much more harmful will the use of poison be."[107] Proscaerus then admits that there is "poison" in papal ceremonies, but one that does not impact the mind, but only the body.[108]

So far, Eusebius has not been able to persuade his interlocutor that environment and physical action affect the soul in any way. However, one ought to keep in mind that Proscaerus began the dialogue complaining of the guilt he experienced over his illicit communion. He would thus seem to be at odds with himself, divided between the testimony of the heart and his ability to generate evasive rationalizations. This split between his affect and his reasoning faculty corresponds to his desire to sequester the "poison" of false ceremonies in the body so that his soul will be left untainted.

Interestingly enough, similar appeals to a hierarchy of "internal" belief over "external" ritualization are frequently attributed to the Reformation as evidence of its inherent "anti-ritualism," but in this case, such a perspective is presented as being one of the most potent threats to Protestant solidarity and perseverance.[109] In contrast to the solipsistic notion of authenticity

[106]Ibid., C 6/v: "Quid hoc ad nostram quæstionem facit, quae non concernit res liberas & licitas, sed illicitas? Deinde, in eo quod facio, licet ipsa papstica sacra non probem, meipsum tamen non iudico: hoc est, factum meum non damno."

[107]Ibid., C 6/v.

[108]Ibid., C 6/v: "Verum mente illa non atingo, sed corpore duntaxat."

[109]Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, "Kneeling before God—Kneeling before the Emperor: The Transformation of a Ritual during the Confessional Conflict in Germany," in *Resonances: Historical Essays on Continuity and Change,* ed. Nils Holger Petersen, Eyolf Østrem, and Andreas Bücker (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 149–172; Adam B. Seligman, Robert P. Weller, Michael J. Puett, and Bennett Simon, *Ritual and its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), esp. "Introduction," 3–6, and "Ritual and Sincerity," 103–130.

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frequently associated with the Reformation's valorization of faith, Andrew Pettegree writes of the public, cultural context of religious transformation operating in early modern Europe: "Religious choice may still be personal—as it often was—without being private. Decisions were best arrived at in a communal context. Much of the culture of persuasion in the sixteenth century was based on the assumption that decisions would be arrived at collectively."[110] Pettegree's analysis of different scenes of Evangelical persuasion, such as in communal singing and the theater, helps clarify the suspicion present in the anti-Nicodemite texts of those who would disguise their private, individualized theological commitments in a public, liturgical setting.[111] Eusebius justifies such suspicion by means of theological simile: faith in the Gospel cannot be contained in the soul, but must burst forth through in word and deed, because as with a flame, too tight an enclosure causes suffocation.[112] If Proscaerus persists much longer in dissimulation, his relationship to the divine will be extinguished.[113]

These warnings continue across the dialogue, but they also need to be backed up by further scriptural exegesis. This is because the Bible offers some important examples of holy characters involved in ritual dissimulation that would appear useful for Nicodemite apologies. The dialogue attends to three sets of biblical precedents: Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and Naaman the Syrian. Proscaerus's argument for appealing to these figures is that, because God's being and will are immutable, and since he did not condemn these three men, he would not condemn people who are doing the same in the sixteenth century.[114] However, from the perspective of Eusebius, to imitate these characters without careful consideration of their respective narratives is to invite disaster. Moreover, these three have more latitude for complicated ethical engagements in ritual problems because the practices of the Church had not been fully determined, especially Naaman, who lived hundreds of year before the birth of Christ.[115] Such figures had not yet fully been admitted into the society of Christians (or of the Israelites, in the case of Naaman) when they dissimulated, whereas the "new Nicodemites" have backed away from their former confessions and practices, returning to the papacy "like the dog who goes back to his vomit."[116] This consideration of

[110]Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 8.

[111]Ibid., 53, for the communal power of singing in opinion formation.

[112]*Proscaerus*, C 7/v.

[113]Ibid., C 8/r: "Igniculum fidei prorsus extinguat."

[114]Ibid., E 6/r.

[115]Naaman, the Syrian, receives the protection of the prophet in order that he may serve his master in pagan services without offending God. He converted to the religion of the Israelites after being healed of leprosy by Elisha in 2 Kings 5.

[116]Ibid., E 6/v. See Proverbs 26:11, 2 Peter 2:22.

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context links Musculus's critique of Nicodemite readings of the Bible to Westphal's warning about the circumstances of ritual. In both sacred text and worship, context shapes the moral meaning and the effect of Christian practice.

By pressing Proscaerus to acknowledge the context of these biblical loci, Eusebius compels him to admit that there is a qualitative difference between the circumstances of those who are new to faith in God, and those who have practiced authentic piety and worship for many years and then abandon those observances when they become inconvenient or dangerous.[117] What's more, characters like Naaman are not to be appealed to and imitated on the basis of a literalistic interpretation, but instead are examples of God's mercy to human weakness. That weakness is treated most effectively not only by recognizing the true nature of divinity, but by being immersed in that knowledge through ritual practice: "By his [Namaan's] example, do not Christians see that with faith in Christ there is not only the teachings, but also that it requires their having been initiated in the secret rites, and that it takes them several years before they have arrived at knowledge of the truth?"[118] Being a Christian for Musculus thus demands more than assent to a creedal statement; habitual participation in sacred practices cements the conversion and brings the participant closer to the truth of the Gospel.

Considering the perils of human weakness, Proscaerus blurts out that he hopes God preserves him from the fate of other one-time Evangelicals who revert to Catholic practices against their conscience. This brings the dialogue back to Proscaerus's initial concerns that his soul would be blinded by despair—the same kind of despair felt by Nicodemite dissimulators who realize that their communion with idolaters constitutes a betrayal of God.[119] Eusebius uses this opportunity to caution Proscaerus against backsliding. He warns that illicit ritual communion, and the self-deception and guilt it prompts, leaves the soul vulnerable to demonic temptations—being conjoined to impurity prompts the soul to disassociate from the body, or to turn against it.[120] That is to say, by witnessing the body participate in acts that are contrary to the divine law, the soul condemns itself. Demonic forces invade the soul in the form of emotional trauma, despair, and self-loathing.

By the end of the dialogue, conversation and intellectual communion show themselves to be indispensible for reversing the effects of hypocrisy and

[117]Ibid., G 1/v.

[118]*Proscaerus*, E 7/r: "Et huius sese exemplo tuebuntur Christiani, in fide Christi non solum doctrina, sed & mysterijs imbuti, & cognitionem ueritatis ante annos non paucos adepti?"

[119]The dialogue notes two famous examples of backsliding Evangelicals who are tormented by the devil and consumed by their conscience on *Proscaerus*, G 3/v, that is, Francis Spira and Johannes Hoffmeister. The former was especially prevalent in Protestant popular literature. See David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), 132–147.

[120]*Proscaerus*, G 3/v.

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pollution. Even if merely being present for idolatrous ceremonies is enough to put the onlooker in some sort of communion with the papacy, Musculus ends by affirming persuasion as the chief means of fostering true worship. The dialogue concludes with Eusebius inviting his companions back to his house for dinner.[121] It is no coincidence that this is the same domestic space where he conducts his personal devotions in lieu of church attendance, and so the act of this more mundane communion hints at the continuation of a grassroots project of restoring the Protestant community.

The domicile, the house church, became a key site for worship in times of confessional oppression. Musculus speaks to this point in an open letter he addressed to an anonymous citizen of Augsburg in November of 1551.[122] Recommending repentance for past sins to the faithful there, he also advises them to keep away from churches that since the Interim "have been stained with innocent blood."[123] This image of the blood stains resonates between references to the victims of confessional violence during the Schmalkaldic War and to the sacramental sacrifice of Christ's body in the Catholic Mass. Instead of risking pollution by having children baptized in polluted and disordered churches, Musculus advises that loyal Evangelicals conduct baptisms and circumcisions in their private homes with help of "a pious Evangelical brother."[124] In times of trial, Protestant communities appear to have become smaller and more intimate. With regard to the reform movements on the continent, scholars most frequently associate the practice of meeting in conventicles or house churches with "the left wing of the Reformation," Anabaptists whose theologies and practices were considered seditious by the mainline reformers.[125] Nevertheless, as evinced from Musculus's writings, the return to the most basic ritual of "getting together with other Protestants, and reading and talking about being Protestants" was an essential tactic for keeping fellow Protestants clear of the polluted churches.[126]

[121]Ibid., G 4/v.

[122]*Ain Sendbrieff Dess Herrn W. Meüszlins Geschrieben inn Bern / an einen Augspurger / im Monat Nouember* (Augsburg: Hans Zimmermann, 1551), http://gateway-bayern.de/VD16+M+7300.

[123]Musculus, *Ain Sendbrieff Dess Herrn W. Meüszlins*, A ij/v.

[124]Ibid.

[125]See George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 3rd ed. (Kirksville, Mo.: Truman State University Press, 1992), 989.

[126]Alec Ryrie, "Congregations, Conventicles and the Nature of Early Scottish Protestantism," *Past & Present* 191, no. 1 (May 2006): 53.

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## V. Conclusion

The argument of this article is that there have been some specific concerns about the capacity of materials, bodies, and practices of worship to pollute Protestant Christianity in times of crisis. In contrast to the various scholarly narratives of disenchantment which assume a process of purification without giving a detailed account of what actually constituted pollution in the first place, I have attempted to articulate what unifies Protestant ideas about impurity in ritual, that is, pollution as the materialization of rival theologies that obscure the sacred mysteries of Gospel-instituted sacraments. As we have seen from Musculus's dialogue *Proscaerus*, bodily pollution through Catholic rites was not simply a metaphor—the body becomes sullied and poisoned by these practices. The more insidious effect of ritual pollution, however, is the unnatural bifurcation of body and soul that ensues for the Protestant who attempts to retain her theological commitments internally while physically participating in idolatrous worship. The end result is disharmony between body and soul, self-condemnation, and demonic temptation to despair. For both Lutheran and Reformed critics of compromise in rituals, the question of ritual purity was always linked to pastoral concerns about the spiritual security of their respective communities.

By attending to the causes and effects of idolatrous pollution, I demonstrated that embodied ritual praxis was deeply ingrained with incarnational significance for early modern Protestants. In other words, that if the Reformation is the onset of a "Christian modernity," then this does not only take place through iconoclasm, but simultaneously through a reinvestment of meaning and power into the material elements of religion, particularly with regards to their use in erecting spiritual and social boundaries between rival confessions. The dangers that Protestant intellectuals discerned in ritual compromise were often so multivalent that they can be difficult to pin down and define with precision. Their polymorphic representations of the threat of impure contact were a new strain of incarnationalist thought and rhetoric, one that indeed may have had deep implications for other modern ideologies of purity.[127] Whereas in late-medieval Catholic contexts, the incarnational

[127]Susannah Heschel, "Race as Incarnational Theology: Affinities between German Protestantism and Racial Theory," in *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings: Investigating Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in Early Christian Studies*, ed. Laura Nasrallah and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2009), 211–234. My thanks to Adam Y. Stern for bringing Heschel's work to my attention. For an example relating to liberal Protestant practices of healing, see Pamela E. Klassen, *Spirits of Protestantism: Healing, Medicine, and Liberal Protestantism* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2011).

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aspect of liturgical materiality was frequently associated with the miraculous properties of relics and the elements of the Mass,[128] in the context of Protestant controversies concerning ritual, it became a manifestation of the eschatological opposition between the churches of Christ and Antichrist.

[128]See Caroline Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); in addition to her article, "The Sacrality of Things: An Inquiry into Divine Materiality in the Christian Middle Ages," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 78, no. 1 (January 2013): 3–18.

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