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## The *Reformatio* – and *Deformatio* – of Ritual: German Catholic Preaching on Ceremonies between the Later Middle Ages, Luther, and Trent

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### ABSTRACT

Ritual performances and discourses counted among the most vital and visible signs of German Catholic renewal in the wake of Trent (1563) and especially during the Baroque era, and were crucial to the formation of Catholic identity after earlier decades of uncertainty. But Catholic preachers seized upon the centrality of ceremonies much earlier than scholars have understood, as is well attested by the lectionary sermons (postils) they published *en masse* after 1530. In these sermons they remained in dialogue with late medieval and humanist traditions, constantly criticized contemporary Catholic abuses, and sought to refute the charges of their Protestant opponents. When addressing ceremonies, Catholic divines preached in terms that encompassed both “Catholic Reform” and “Counter-Reformation,” and had worked out much of what we consider post-Tridentine ritual theory much earlier than we have thought. Prominent sermon authors included Johannes Eck, Friedrich Nausea, Johann Wild, Georg Witzel, Michael Holding, and Johannes Hoffmeister.

### KEYWORDS

Sermons; postils; ritual; ceremony; German Catholicism; processions; Catholic preaching

The scholarly consensus on Catholic ritual during the German Reformation and Counter-Reformation is a myth propped-up by self-congratulatory narratives. We are told that in the wake of the withering critique of ceremonies by evangelicals after 1517, traditional ritual waned or collapsed even in areas that remained Catholic.<sup>1</sup> This happened especially in cases of pilgrimages and procession routes to graves, relics, and saintly images. So the Protestants won. Such ceremonies flourished again following the Council of Trent (1545–1563) and especially after 1600.<sup>2</sup> So the Catholics struck back. Among the salient characteristics of German Baroque Catholicism was a ritual renaissance that included pilgrimages, elaborate veneration of saints, new confraternities, intense practices of Marian piety, and numerous processions such as Corpus Christi

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<sup>1</sup>Typical is the presentation of Friedhelm Jürgensmeier, “Die Eucharistie in der Barockfrömmigkeit am Mittelrhein,” *Archiv für mittelrheinische Kirchengeschichte* 23 (1971): 103–19.

<sup>2</sup>General discussion in Philip M. Soergel, “Ritual and Faith Formation in Early Modern Catholic Europe,” in *Educating People of Faith: Exploring the History of Jewish and Christian Communities*, ed. John Van Engen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 314–29; see also Soergel’s regional study, *Wondrous in His Saints: Counter-Reformation Propaganda in Bavaria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). An excellent study of processional ritual in a post-Tridentine context, just southeast of French Lyon, is Keith P. Luria, *Territories of Grace: Cultural Change in the Seventeenth-Century Diocese of Grenoble* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

and the Rogations.<sup>3</sup> Participation in such ritual acts distinguished one as a Catholic and was considered necessary for the formation of Catholic consciousness (or “confessional identity,” in current scholarly parlance).<sup>4</sup> Along with church architecture, this revival of ceremony was the most visible feature of German Catholic renewal. Scholars have, rightly, made much of it.

But this ritual renaissance was accompanied by a wealth of texts including model sermons and preaching aids.<sup>5</sup> In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, a sophisticated and specifically anti-protestant ritual discourse circulated that offered priests and literate laypersons homilies, pamphlets, and learned tomes by authors such as Martin Eisengrein (d. 1578), Johannes Nas, OFM (d. 1590), Matthias Tympe (d. 1616), and Jakob Gretser, SJ (d. 1625).<sup>6</sup> The weightier works of Tympe and Gretser provided nothing less than a contemporary Catholic ritual theory, which included presentations of the liturgical year and its ceremonies, their origins, and their legitimacy based on scripture and tradition, as well as explanations of what rituals did and how they accomplished it.<sup>7</sup>

The task here is *not* to elaborate on the well-known flowering of German Catholic ceremonial life in the wake of the Council of Trent, nor to explicate the detailed treatments of ceremony produced by ritual theorists such as Tympe and Gretser (although the latter would contribute much to studies of counter-reformation Catholicism, and needs to be done).<sup>8</sup> What scholars of pre-Tridentine Germany have ignored, is Catholic discourse on ritual in the decades that followed the rise of the evangelical movement after 1517. What scholars have overlooked, is the extent to which ritual practice persisted among Catholics in the wake of Luther. The supposed decline of ritual until its late sixteenth-century revival is in many cases overstatement or assumption. What is also assumed – primarily

<sup>3</sup>Marc R. Forster, *Catholic Revival in the Age of the Baroque: Religious Identity in Southwest Germany, 1550–1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); idem, *Catholic Germany from the Reformation to the Enlightenment* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 73–84, 144–83.

<sup>4</sup>As it could be for sixteenth-century Lutherans as well: Bodo Nischan, “Ritual and Protestant Identity in Late Reformation Germany,” in *Protestant History and Identity in Sixteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Bruce Gordon, 2 vols. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1996), 2: 142–58 (incl. 147, n. 26).

<sup>5</sup>All references to early modern sources will include their identifiers in the German equivalents of the *Short Title Catalogue* (STC): VD16 and VD17. *Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachbereich erschienenen Drucke des 16. Jahrhunderts* ([www.vd16.de](http://www.vd16.de)); *Das Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachraum erschienenen Drucke des 17. Jahrhunderts* ([www.vd17.de](http://www.vd17.de)). Both websites include digitized copies of many of these sources.

<sup>6</sup>On Eisengrein see Soergel, *Wondrous in His Saints*, 99–130. On Nas: Stephan Diller, “Das Leben und Wirken des fränkischen Kontroverstheologen Johannes Nas (1534–1590) im Zeitalter der katholischen Reform und Gegenreformation,” *Würzburger Diözesangeschichtsblätter* 61 (1999): 67–77. On Tympe: Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, *Society and Religion in Münster, 1535–1618* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 118–22 (s.v. also “Tympe” in the index). On Gretser: Hermann König, “Jakob Gretser (1562–1625): Ein Charakterbild,” *Freiburger Diözesan Archiv* 77 (1957): 136–70; and Urs Herzog, “Jakob Gretser’s Leben und Werk,” *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch* 22 (1970): 1–36.

<sup>7</sup>Tympe, *Der Ceremonien Warumb / Das ist / Lautere vnnd klare vrsachen vnd außlegungen der fürnehmsten Ceremonien* ... (Münster: Lambert Raßfeldt, 1609; VD17 23: 645000E); Gretser, *De sacris et religiosis peregrinationibus libri quatuor. Eiusdem de catholicae ecclesiae processionibus seu supplicationibus libri duo* ... (Ingolstadt: Adam Sartorius, 1606; VD17 12: 120704K); idem, *De festis christianorum libri duo* ... (Ingolstadt: Andreas Angermayer, 1612; VD17 12: 111801T). Gretser’s *De processionibus* was translated and expanded by Conrad Vetter, *Procession Buch / Das ist: Catholischer Grundt vnd außführliche Erklärung / Von den heiligen Bettfahrten / Creutzgängen vnd Processionen / so nach vhraltem Gebrauch / In der gantzen allgemeinen Christenheit gehalten werden* (Ingolstadt: Andreas Angermayer, 1612; VD17 12: 120688M), which is treated briefly by Jaša Drnovšek, “Frühneuzeitliche Passionsprozessionsspiele als Projekt der katholischen Erneuerung,” in *Themes of Polemical Theology across Early Modern Genres*, ed. Svorad Zavorský et al. (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 321–34, here 322–28.

<sup>8</sup>For a brief overview of several aspects of Catholic ritual theory after Trent, see John M. Frymire, “*Demonstrationes catholicae*: Defining Communities through Counter-Reformation Rituals,” in *Defining Community in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Michael J. Halvorson and Karen E. Spierling (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2016), 163–82, here 163–69. Cf. Soergel, *Wondrous in His Saints*, 80–98.

for lack of asking the question – is that pre-Tridentine Catholic authors failed to take up issues of ritual. Historians occasionally note earlier Catholic statements on ceremony, but never systematically.<sup>9</sup> And they have ignored ritual discourse in the most prominent and influential genre of works employed to confront the Reformation in the trenches of everyday life: Catholic sermons delivered in specific places and/or printed for use by all priests in their pulpits.<sup>10</sup>

What follows is an analysis of German Catholic preaching on ritual between the Later Middle Ages, Luther, and Trent. Most of these sermons were delivered, and all were printed and distributed for use by ordinary priests. Given their comparably large size and cost, these tomes passed through the hands of several generations of priests, formed the core of those books found in parsonage libraries, and were in fact often mandated, paid for, and distributed by bishops or other local authorities. Their influence endured well beyond the more disposable genres such as the pamphlets and treatises that scholars tend to privilege. The issue is not the originality of Catholic preaching on ceremonies after 1517. Preachers sought to establish scriptural and historical precedents for every topic at stake, i.e. the goal was *not* to be original, but to challenge the “reformation of ritual” head-on.<sup>11</sup> They did so regularly and, by their own standards, precisely and thoroughly. This is not to suggest that Catholic preachers did so convincingly or successfully, for the sources considered here allow no such verdict. These sermons demonstrate without question, however, (1) that leading Catholic sermon authors between Luther and Trent grasped the threat of evangelical theology to traditional Catholic ritual practices; (2) that they sought to provide their audiences (and the priests who used their sermon collections) with extensive explanations of ceremonies and with arguments that countered Protestant positions; and (3) that while defending and explaining they also criticized many contemporary practices and therefore continued the late medieval discourse on ritual abuses that resurfaced later at sixteenth-century German reform synods as well as at Trent.

German Catholic preachers could do so because their predecessors had bequeathed them a wealth of materials on ritual. Such sources explained every detail of Catholic ceremonies and frequently called for the abolition of unauthorized practices and “superstitions.” The Augustinian friar, Martin Luther, had absorbed this discourse because, like many of the Catholic divines who opposed him, he was a thoroughly-formed mendicant, and detailed ritual analysis was a standard tool in any preacher’s kit. That is why a study of the Catholic response to ritual issues in the wake of Luther must begin in the later Middle Ages.

<sup>9</sup>On ritual in early catholic pamphlets (there is not much), see Hugo Laemmer, *Die vortridentinische-katholische Theologie des Reformations-Zeitalters* (Berlin: Gustav Schlawitz, 1858), 204–7, 250, 258, and 275; and David V. N. Bagchi, *Luther’s Earliest Opponents: Catholic Controversialists, 1518–1525* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 40, 119, 124 (n. 106), and 186. Bagchi’s superb work supplants Laemmer’s, but the latter is still required reading because of the quantity of excerpts from the sources.

<sup>10</sup>The production of standard, lectionary sermon collections (postils) by Catholics equaled that of Luther’s famous postils until 1535, and kept pace with Luther’s and other evangelical authors’ postils thereafter. (Luther’s was the only protestant version until 1535.) See John M. Frymire, *The Primacy of the Postils: Catholics, Protestants, and the Dissemination of Ideas in Early Modern Germany*, *Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions*, 147 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2010), 50–74.

<sup>11</sup>A common phrase thanks to the original study of Lutheran rituals by Susan C. Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Ritual. An Interpretation of Early Modern Germany* (London: Routledge, 1997), which focuses on Lutheran rituals.

## I. Ritual practice and ritual discourse on the eve of the reformation

Whether or not the state of religion around 1500 was one of profound dysfunction and deep spiritual anxiety, or one of utter churchliness and devotion, is a matter of debate.<sup>12</sup> But we concur that religious experience was saturated with ritual throughout the liturgical year.<sup>13</sup> It was especially so on those days of consecration such as Candlemas (when priests blessed the candles that congregants used to avert storms), during those dramatic productions such as Ascension Thursday (when a life-sized, wooden Jesus rose up through the church's roof), and throughout those extended processions such as the major and minor litanies (the feasts of St. Mark and Rogations).

Late medieval preachers had a variety of standard works at their disposal that presented the history, proper use, symbolic meaning, and theological explanation of ceremonies as well as the objects associated with them. Among the most circulated (and, after the 1450s, printed) were the works of the medieval French liturgists William Durandus (*Rationale divinatorum officiorum*, c. 1286) and John Beletth (*Summa de ecclesiasticis officiis*, c. 1160), as well as the descriptions and interpretations of feast-day rituals compiled by the Italian compiler of saints' lives, Jacobus de Voragine (*Legenda aurea*, c. 1260).<sup>14</sup> Any preacher composing model sermons for publication had access to these and other such works.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the most popular sermon collections up to 1517, including the utterly generic *plenaria*, shared much of the same ritual material even if they differed in terms of detail and emphasis.<sup>16</sup> Authors drew on common sources just as they drew on one another. These authors understood as well that late medieval cities, towns, and villages constantly conducted political ceremonies for bishops, princes, or patrician city councils, which laid bare what everyone knew: ritual confirmed and articulated the ideologies of authority in all of its guises.<sup>17</sup> No one attended a sermon without knowing as much.

<sup>12</sup>Summarized (with literature) by Robert W. Scribner, *The German Reformation*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 7–9.

<sup>13</sup>Overview in Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 15–154 (for thorough coverage of the fifteenth century).

<sup>14</sup>For descriptions and editions of Durandus and Jacobus, see Paul W. Robinson, "Sermons on the Lord's Prayer and the Rogation Days in the Later Middle Ages," in *A History of Prayer: The First to the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Roy Hammerling, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, 13 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2006), 441–62, here 444–48. Douteil found over 194 manuscripts of Beletth's work: *Johannis Beletth Summa de ecclesiasticis officiis*, ed. Heribert Douteil, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis, 41a (Turnhout: Brepols, 1976), 75ff.

<sup>15</sup>Similar works were numerous and probably known to at least some of the authors discussed below, but cannot be considered here, e.g. Isidore of Seville, *De ecclesiasticis officiis* (c. 600); Amalarius of Metz, *Liber officialis* (c. 810); John of Avranches, *Liber de officiis ecclesiasticis* (c. 1050); Rupert of Deutz, *Liber de divinis officiis* (c. 1120); Robert Paululus, *De officiis ecclesiasticis* (c. 1180); Sicard of Cremona, *Mitralis sive de officiis ecclesiasticis summa* (c. 1180); and William of Auxerre, *De officiis ecclesiasticis* (c. 1220).

<sup>16</sup>For an example using various Rogation sermons, see Robinson, "Sermons on the Lord's Prayer and the Rogation Days," 454–61. The *plenaria*, available in Latin and German editions, contained the lectionary gospel readings (i.e. pericopes) with explanations that were shorter than those in standard sermon collections, but still two or three thousand words in length. Vincenz Hasak provided over sixty sermons from seven different editions (1478–1518) in: *Die Himmelstrasse, oder: Die Evangelien des Jahres in Erklärungen für das christliche Volk nach deutschen Plenarien aus der Zeit 1500* (Regensburg: Georg Joseph Manz, 1882).

<sup>17</sup>Two superb examples in the realm of urban politics and its representations are by Andrea Löther: *Prozessionen in spätmittelalterlichen Städten. Politische Partizipation, obrigkeitliche Inszenierung, städtische Einheit, Norm und Struktur: Studien zum sozialen Wandel im Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, 12 (Cologne: Böhlau, 1999); and "Rituale im Bild: Prozessionsdarstellungen bei Albrecht Dürer, Gentile Belline und in der Konzilschronik Ulrich Richentals," in *Mundus in imagine: Bildersprache und Lebenswelten im Mittelalter. Festgabe für Klaus Schreiner*, ed. Andrea Löther et al. (Munich: W. Fink, 1996), 99–123.

As would be the case after 1517, late medieval preachers most often explicated ceremonies in depth during services that focused on sacraments or included theatrics, processions, or the distribution of sacramentals (blessed salt, candles, palm branches, etc.). In most of the surviving Rogation sermons, for example, preachers distinguished between the major and minor litanies, and documented their use already in the fifth and sixth centuries by Bishop Mamertus of Vienne (d. 475) and Pope Gregory the Great (d. 604). They explained that the crosses, banners, and bells represented the standards and trumpets of Christ the King, just as these objects drove demons out of villages and fields. They taught that the rituals were a type of pious *imitatio* wherein participants emulated Christ and the apostles, who had processed to the Mount of Olives. And they explained why these processions occurred in the Spring, the season of new, fragile crops, of military campaigns, and of increased sexual appetites.<sup>18</sup> These elaborate rituals sought to intensify devotion and prayer and thus to avert God's wrath at an especially dangerous time of year.

Late medieval divines answered questions such as: On Ash Wednesday, why do we cover the images inside church and hang a screen between the priest and congregation? During storms, why do we ring the church bell and carry the Eucharist about in procession?<sup>19</sup> Preachers used everyday examples to distinguish rituals and ritual objects from what they were supposed to teach or represent (i.e. the sign from the signified), not only to explain ceremonies but to dissuade listeners from ascribing sacral powers to the gestures or objects themselves. The signifier (*zaiger*) or wood carving of a bunch of grapes on the tavern door is not the wine that is served in the tavern; it merely represents the wine that is served there. Step up and lick that carving all you want – but good luck getting drunk.<sup>20</sup> Ceremonies were in this sense *representationes* of spiritual things and thus, like sacred images, prone to misunderstanding and abuse. Just as the ritual act of pilgrimage accomplished nothing in and of itself, so the image venerated at the pilgrimage site had no “godly or supernatural power” whatsoever.<sup>21</sup> Which does not mean that preachers distinguished their religion too much from that of their charges: they believed and participated in all of those rituals that, from our perspective, might seem superstitious or ridiculous.<sup>22</sup>

By 1500, many treatises and sermons incorporated a more recent discourse that sought to differentiate the function of ritual explicitly in terms of an “outer” and “inner” spiritual dynamic. Exempt were issues such as the priest's actions during the Mass as well as the *opus operatum* character of other sacramental rites; these came under intense scrutiny later, in the wake of Luther. Instead preachers emphasized how outer acts of ritual worked upon the inner state of the participants. The impulse to explain ceremony as such came from several directions. Thomas Lenten found a

<sup>18</sup>Robinson, “Sermons on the Lord's Prayer,” 42. Every point mentioned above is found in Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda aurea: The Golden Legend*, trans. W. G. Ryan, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 1: 285–89.

<sup>19</sup>Examples in Florenz Landmann, *Das Predigtwesen in Westfalen in der letzten Zeit des Mittelalters. Ein Beitrag zur Kirchen- und Kulturgeschichte, Vorreformationsgeschichtliche Forschungen*, 1 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1900), 173f. and n. 5.

<sup>20</sup>From a late fifteenth-century sermon collection, in manuscript, compiled by university theologians for rural priests near Vienna; Ernst Englisch, “Deutsche Predigten als Vermittler zwischen Gelehrtenkultur und Volkskultur,” in *Volkskultur des europäischen Spätmittelalters: Beiträge der Internationalen Tagung vom 24.-26. VI. 1986 ...*, ed. Peter Dinzelbacher (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1987), 147–58, here 155.

<sup>21</sup>Examples in Landmann, *Das Predigtwesen in Westfalen*, 172.

<sup>22</sup>On this point Englisch is certainly correct: “Deutsche Predigten als Vermittler,” 153f.

diverse body of authors who contrasted ritual gestures with genuine, inner piety. Nobody denied that ceremony might help refashion the inner person (*ad interioris hominis reformationem*), but many devalued external practices in favor of an “inner spiritual training program” intended to produce internal piety (*Andacht, devotio*). Several late medieval sources distinguished between *Andacht* and *Gebärde*, i.e. legitimate, pious, internal devotion versus mere ritual gesture, even if the latter might prove useful for achieving an authentic, internal state of devotion. The interiorization of piety typically ascribed to Reformation spirituality was actually the product of an earlier process to which Luther and his heirs lent intensified emphasis. As Lentjes put it, “the separation of ‘outer’ and ‘inner’ represents one of the central cultural and religious explanatory models for the upheaval of the sixteenth century.”<sup>23</sup>

Outward, ritualized acts could serve to instill what really mattered, the inner devotion required of the heart (*anima*); ideally the outer performance would mirror what was achieved inwardly. These ideas are most familiar to us in the writings and practices of the *devotio moderna*, especially via Desiderius Erasmus (d. 1536), who in a number of best-selling works displayed both an appreciation and suspicion of ceremonies.<sup>24</sup> On the one hand, ordinary Christians were spiritual children (*infanti in Christo*) who needed ceremonies to reach religious maturity; outward devotion fostered inward growth. The “signs” or “representations” of ritual, including performative acts, merely reminded believers of what they needed to achieve inwardly: the crown, robes, and scepter did not make the king, but rather his *imitatio* of what these signs signified.<sup>25</sup> For the “weak in faith” (i.e. just about everyone), ceremonies were “in fact necessary or,” as Erasmus haltingly put it, “almost necessary,” even if they were a “lesser and lower way” to God.<sup>26</sup> Like-minded humanists understood the commoners’ adoration of the saints similarly, as a lesser but necessary first step towards authentic, inner piety.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, Erasmus charged, ordinary folk succumbed to their lowest natures during ritual celebrations. Worse yet, the clergy had emphasized rituals – especially their own – to the point where simple Christians identified the religion with the rites, and as such were no better than Jews.<sup>28</sup>

By 1517, Erasmus was the most recognized champion of the outer-inner spiritual dynamic. He thought that the Church had instituted unnecessary and scripturally unfounded ceremonies to the detriment of ordinary Christians, who as a result put

<sup>23</sup>Thomas Lentjes, “‘Andacht’ und ‘Gebärde’. Das religiöse Ausdrucksverhalten,” in *Kulturelle Reformation. Sinnformationen im Umbruch, 1400–1600*, ed. Bernhard Jussen, Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte, 145 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 29–67, here 30–33 (including quotations).

<sup>24</sup>These ideas were formulated explicitly in the statutes of *devotio moderna* groups; see Hans Michael Franke, *Der Liber Ordinarius der Regularkanoniker der Windesheimer Kongregation*, *Studia Vindesemensia*, II, 1 (Leverkusen-Opladen: Borngässer, 1981), 60–61 (incl. 60, n. 1). For Erasmus, see below, as well as the concise summary in Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, 158 and 175–77.

<sup>25</sup>Bruno Quast, “*wort und zeychen*. Ritualkritik im Spätmittelalter und früherer Neuzeit,” *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 27 (2002): 1–19, here 8f.

<sup>26</sup>Erasmus, *Enchiridion militis christiani* (1501), in Cornelis Augustijn, *Erasmus: His Life, Works, and Influence*, trans. J. C. Grayson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 48.

<sup>27</sup>A 1530 letter from Cardinal Jacopo Sadolet to Erasmus explained precisely this. See Marc Venard, “Dans l’affrontement des réformes du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle: regards et jugements portés sur la religion populaire,” in *La religion populaire: actes du colloque international, Paris, 17–19 octobre 1977*, ed. Guy Duboscq and Bernard Plongeron (Paris: Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1979), 114–25; here 116f. (incl. nn. 5 & 12).

<sup>28</sup>For Erasmus, “Jewish” meant acting out, as opposed to *living*, one’s religion (reflecting Jesus’s critique of the Pharisees in the Gospels). See James D. Tracy, “Liberation through the Philosophia Christi: Erasmus as a Reformer of Doctrina, 1514–1521,” *Lutherjahrbuch* 62 (1995): 28–47, here 34, 36f., and 42f.; Quast, “*wort und zeychen*,” 6–8.

too much value in their “works.” He despised the licentiousness rampant during many festival days. And he was confident that his program for the inner development of the faithful would result in a devaluation, but by no means elimination, of religious ritual. To be sure, Erasmus spoke to an intellectual and religious elite at a level of discourse beyond the reach of commoners. But similar ideas in simpler form regarding the proper understanding of ceremonies circulated through pulpits. Indeed, they are found in the most influential standard sermon collection of the later Middle Ages, that of Johannes Herolt, *OP* (d. 1468), which German presses had reprinted at least sixty-nine times by 1520 – a number which, in terms of the early history of print as well as the work’s size, is astounding, as almost 90,000 copies of this work circulated among parish priests looking for sermon helps by the time anyone had heard of Luther.<sup>29</sup> Like his contemporaries, Herolt explained the significance of rituals while insisting that their ultimate goal was to affect the inner person, for which reason the faithful should never overrate them. What counted was less the outward acts than the inner disposition those acts helped to achieve.<sup>30</sup> Although fundamental to Christian life, ceremonies were useful only as “instruments” (in the vernacular, “tools,” i.e. hammers and chisels) that beat and cut their way towards internal devotion.<sup>31</sup>

Erasmus was also not alone when he attacked the abuses associated with ceremonies including debauchery and superstition. Late medieval preachers steadily criticized ritual practices, especially the misconceptions of commoners as well as their raucous behavior on ritually-charged occasions; they indicted their own colleagues as well. Pastors in Westphalia complained that peasants laid bare the problem in one of their maxims: “If someone is not killed or at least maimed on a feast day, then something’s wrong with the booze!” It hardly helped that the taverners opened early on such days and either spiked the usual beer and wine or served harder stuff.<sup>32</sup> Preachers in Erfurt charged that upon reaching the last church after a lengthy procession, most of the clergy retired to taverns during the votive Mass, only to return later as required by the statutes.<sup>33</sup> Others lamented that days of extended ritual led to extensive drink, which in turn led to dancing, gambling, and fornication.<sup>34</sup> On such occasions, “all of the devils are unleashed such as the sex devil, the braggart devil, the gambling devil, and the drinking devil.”<sup>35</sup> Things got worse once people returned home, for there they performed superstitious

<sup>29</sup>A complete volume of Herolt’s Sunday and festival day sermons ran about 325 leaves in folio. Nearly two hundred manuscripts of the work survive as well. Publication data in Ian D. K. Siggins, *A Harvest of Medieval Preaching: The Sermon Books of Johann Herolt, OP (Discipulus)* (Bloomington, Indiana: Xlibris, 2009), 295f. and 314–17.

<sup>30</sup>“Affectus offerentis plus placet deo quam munus offerentis.” Johannes Herolt, *Sermones discipuli de tempore et de sanctis* (Nuremberg: Anton Koberger, 1480), *sermo* 13, section 5 (no foliation); Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 2 Inc. c.a. 952.

<sup>31</sup>“Cerimoniae nostrae exteriores et corporales exercitationes ... sunt instrumenta perveniendi ad illa interiora, quae non sunt laudabilia nisi in ordine ad illum finem aut quantum a bonis actibus interioribus imperantur.” Johannes Herolt, *Sermones discipuli super epistolas* ([Ulm: Johann Zainer der Ältere], ca. 1479–83), fol. O4r (*sermo* 44); Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 2 Inc. s.a. 570 a Beibd. 1. For late medieval German translations of *instrumentum* as “Gezeug” or “Werkzeug,” see Lorenz Diefenbach, *Glossarium Latino-Germanicum mediae et infimae aetatis* (1857; reprint Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997), 302 (s.v. *instrumentum*), and *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, ed. Jakob Grimm, 33 vols. (1854–1971; reprint Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1984), 29: 419–26, in this context esp. the examples at 424, 3), b).

<sup>32</sup>Reported by Landmann, *Das Predigtwesen in Westfalen*, 190.

<sup>33</sup>Joachim Meisner, *Nachreformatorische katholische Frömmigkeitsformen in Erfurt*, *Erfurter Theologische Studien*, 26 (Leipzig: St. Benno, 1971), 200f. (The problem continued after 1517.)

<sup>34</sup>Nikolaus Kyll, *Pflichtprozessionen und Bannfahrten im westlichen Teil des alten Erzbistums Trier*, *Rheinisches Archiv*, 57 (Bonn: Ludwig Röhrscheid, 1962), 142f.

<sup>35</sup>Sermon manuscript in Landmann, *Das Predigtwesen in Westfalen*, 186.



rites with the sacramentals that the church had consecrated for their benefit. They employed Candlemas tapers for just about everything just as they used “blessed St. Blaise water” as a fertilizer and pesticide.<sup>36</sup>

What late medieval preachers did *not* assess critically, however, was the theology or efficacy of Catholic ritual itself. Nor did their contemporaries such as the humanist Sebastian Brant (d. 1521), who in his *Ship of Fools* (1494) laid waste to the trappings and claims of political rituals but considered the critique of ecclesiastical ceremonies a dangerous taboo, even if he complained about commoners’ behavior and how they polluted sacred ritual space. Erasmus joined him inasmuch as he never questioned the efficacy of (especially sacramental) rituals properly performed.<sup>37</sup> In the same way, the most trenchant official censures focused on the types of superstitions and abuses discussed above rather than on issues specific to the theology of ceremonies. The decrees of numerous fifteenth-century synods and councils in Germany make this clear.<sup>38</sup>

For their part, common men and women engaged themselves intensely with ritual practices. When they did protest, their complaints usually pointed to a lack of ceremony rather than its abuse or glut. There were exceptions. In the region around Trier they grumbled that several ceremonies throughout the year required extra payments (*oblaciones*) to participating clergy, which they understood as blatant signs of their political and economic repression (*signum subiectionis*). Commoners might also request a reduction in the duration of certain rituals, especially those processions that took them well beyond their villages. Bishops often complied given their increasing emphases on the local parish as the site of religious praxis.<sup>39</sup> But the evidence points more towards a populace convinced of the efficacy – and thus need – of church rituals, not least those deemed crucial for the protection of hearth, farm, and town, and especially those intended to ward-off communal crises such as plague, famine, or war. Without recourse to absent clergy, in some instances villagers conducted processions by themselves in order to appease God.<sup>40</sup> They took their pastors to court for failure to perform rituals they deemed especially important.<sup>41</sup> When they signed contracts with new priests, they often stipulated specific dates and details for ceremonies such as processions in addition to preaching and the daily reading of the mass.<sup>42</sup>

By 1517 there was a broad range of ritual practices and ritual discourses in Germany. Erasmus and fellow travelers complained about the excesses of religious rites, acknowledged their vital function, and called for a reformation of internal piety that would lessen

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<sup>36</sup>Examples in English, “Deutsche Predigten als Vermittler,” 157.

<sup>37</sup>Quast, “wort und zeychen,” 4f.

<sup>38</sup>Examples in Robert W. Scribner, “Ritual and Popular Religion in Catholic Germany at the Time of the Reformation,” in *idem, Popular Culture and Popular Movements in Reformation Germany* (London: Hambledon, 1987), 17–47, here 35.

<sup>39</sup>Examples in Kyll, *Pflichtprozessionen und Bannfahrten*, 129 and 151f.

<sup>40</sup>Examples in Alois Kocher, *Bittgänge und Prozessionen*, Veröffentlichungen des Solothurner Staatsarchives, 6 (Olten: Walther, 1968), 38.

<sup>41</sup>Examples in Kyll, *Pflichtprozessionen und Bannfahrten*, 129.

<sup>42</sup>Early sixteenth-century examples in Immacolata Saulle Hippenmeyer, *Nachbarschaft, Pfarrei und Gemeinde in Graubünden 1400–1600*, Quellen und Forschungen zur Bündner Geschichte, 7 (Chur: Kommissionsverlag Bündner Monatsblatt/Desertina, 1997), 43, 148, and 150. Here a 1505 contract requiring a priest to hold and lead processions: “Vnnd baid vicarj mitsampt jren vnnderthonen die crutzgaeng, so von alter haer geschähen jn baid obgenant kilchen vff Hoch Realt, es sye sant Johans oder sant Albin, vff die tåg, so sie vallen, järlichen volbringend. Anders dann an dem tag palmarun bedörffen sie numer mer hinuf, sonder jeder jn siner kilchen beliben.” She cites another contract from 1505 which makes the priest’s duties clear, as she states: “... wobei der Pfarrer insbesondere zur Abhaltung von Messen und Prozessionen ... verpflichtet wird.”

their importance. At the same time, there was a steady stream of late medieval sermon authors who explained the details of ceremonies and why they were crucial, just as they warned about putting too much stock in ritual performances and condemned common and clerical misbehaviors. Discussions of ritual ranged from the high to the low, and although commoners neither preached nor published, they actively engaged with ritual issues just as they constantly participated in ceremonies. When the newly-minted Augustinian monk Martin Luther started to lecture and preach in Wittenberg (1511), he was fully aware of this ritual range due to his training not only as a scholar, but as a mendicant preacher. And like everyone else, he had of course participated constantly in Germany's rich ritual life during the course of his own.

## II. Reformation and ritual: Luther, Evangelicals, and what their Catholic opponents had to work with

Protestant theologians developed new ideas regarding ritual and thereafter abandoned or changed traditional ceremonial practices.<sup>43</sup> Their modifications ranged from the (relatively) conservative revisions made by Luther and his allies to the gutting of most ceremonies done by Ulrich Zwingli (d. 1531) and Reformed theologians thereafter such as John Calvin (d. 1564) and Heinrich Bullinger (d. 1575), who sought to eliminate all vestiges of “papal shit” (*Kaat; feces*) in rituals and church spaces.<sup>44</sup> Our perspective has been long-term, and has allowed us to compare established Protestant practices with those of medieval and post-Tridentine Catholics, as Ernst Walter Zeeden did for Lutheran church ordinances in order to highlight just how many Catholic elements survived.<sup>45</sup> Susan Karant-Nunn showed that in ceremonies ranging from baptism through burial, later German Lutherans led rich ritual lives even if the rites had lost several of their earlier features.<sup>46</sup>

The long term, however, fails to capture the experiences of Luther's Catholic opponents in the first four decades of the Reformation, especially because the “reformation of ritual” emerged sporadically (most often in the contexts of other doctrinal debates)

<sup>43</sup>Useful overview in Carlos N. M. Eire, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), and Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, 155–251. Karin Maag deftly surveys all major confessions, and provides key bibliography, in *Worshipping with the Reformers* (Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2021).

<sup>44</sup>On the Reformed positions see Emidio Campi, “Theological Profile,” and Bruce Gordon, “Polity and Worship in the Swiss Reformed Churches,” in *A Companion to the Swiss Reformation*, ed. Amy Nelson Burnett, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, 72 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2016), 447–88, and 489–519. As Amy Nelson Burnett points out, however, the Reformed tradition still had its ceremonies: even the congregational singing of Psalms was a ritual, as were the (relatively minimized) celebrations of communion and baptism, visitations of the sick, and burials; *Teaching the Reformation: Ministers and Their Message in Basel, 1529–1629* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 155f., 161f., and the literature cited at 397 n. 1.

<sup>45</sup>Ernst Walter Zeeden, *Katholische Überlieferungen in den lutherischen Kirchenordnungen des 16. Jahrhunderts*, Katholisches Leben und Kämpfen im Zeitalter der Glaubensspaltung, 17 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1959); now translated by Kevin G. Walker as (*sic*) *Faith and Act: The Survival of Medieval Ceremonies in the Lutheran Reformation* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2012).

<sup>46</sup>Karant-Nunn, *Reformation of Ritual*, in which each chapter includes a description of a given rite in the later Middle Ages and its survival in the confessional age from baptism through death, with all relevant modifications. Among the more recent publications on Protestant ritual, Natalie Krentz's study on the political and ecclesiopolitical contexts of ceremonial changes in Wittenberg is especially noteworthy: *Ritualwandel und Deutungshoheit: Die frühe Reformation in der Residenzstadt Wittenberg (1500–1533)*, Spätmittelalter, Humanismus, Reformation, 74 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014). See, too, the surprising discovery of the continuity of medieval sensory practices among German Protestants in Jacob M. Baum, *Reformation of the Senses: The Paradox of Religious Belief* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018).

and, at least in the early years, was rarely the focus of polemical exchanges.<sup>47</sup> Luther derived his notions of ceremony from other issues: justification (grace, faith, and works), the sacraments (especially the Eucharist), the authority and function of scripture, the proper understanding of tradition, the invalidity of monasticism, the status of the clergy, and papal and secular power. Every case boiled down to questions of *authority*. With few exceptions, Luther treated issues of ritual as they emerged in other contexts. His Catholic opponents, for example, found bits and pieces regarding ceremony in Luther's best-selling treatise on sacramental theology, his *Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520), which they read to a man.<sup>48</sup> What they failed to find, were nuggets of his teaching on the sacraments in a treatise on ritual, because Luther never published one. Printers released "complete," indexed editions of Luther's works only after 1558.<sup>49</sup> This made the labors of his later Catholic opponents much easier, and allowed them to cite systematically his writings by chapter and verse. Thus the Jesuit Conrad Vetter (d. 1622), in his portrayal of the judicial proceedings of Luther's final judgment before God, had witnesses cite the reformer's works repeatedly to demonstrate how he had destroyed Catholic protective rituals and thereby unleashed innumerable famines, epidemics, and witches.<sup>50</sup> Luther's earlier antagonists worked less systematically and usually struck out against his ritual theology generally rather than specifically. That is why Luther's treatment of ceremony *in toto* is of no help; it is a question of the historical Luther versus *Luther in history* – the latter is of concern here. Any complete analysis of his thoughts on ritual, for example, should include the detailed explications from his lectures on Genesis (1535ff.) as well as the many revealing comments in his *Table Talks*, neither of which were available to the Catholic divines considered below.<sup>51</sup> But there were popular and frequently reprinted works by dozens of evangelical authors, some of which Catholic writers likely knew and which they likely had in mind when they addressed ritual issues.<sup>52</sup> Finally, most authors considered here probably were aware of at least some of the numerous instances of "reformation through provocation," where

<sup>47</sup>There were, however, intra-evangelical debates on ritual issues between Luther and the "fanatics" or "radicals," not to mention Zwingli and the developing Reformed tradition; hence the need, already in 1522, for Luther's *Invocavit Sermons* contra Andreas Karlstadt (d. 1541). See *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Abteilung Werke*, 65 vols. (Weimar: Böhlau, 1883–1993) – hereafter cited as WA – 10/III: 1–64.

<sup>48</sup>*De captivitate Babylonica ecclesiae praeludium*, in WA 6: 497–573, e.g. 561f.

<sup>49</sup>The final volume of the Wittenberg edition (1539ff.) was not completed until 1559, and the Jena edition (1555ff.) until 1558; see Kurt Aland, *Hilfsbuch zum Lutherstudium*, 4th ed. (Bielefeld: Luther-Verlag, 1996), 550f., 562, 570f., and 584.

<sup>50</sup>Conrad Vetter, *Lutherisch Jüngstgericht ...* (Ingolstadt: Andreas Angermayer, 1612; VD17 12: 109703K), 10f. and 75f. (where Jona himself testifies and cites Luther's 1526 commentary on Jona: in the text's margin: "Luther Tom.[us] 5 Wittenberg ed.]. fol. 328. b. §3 etc. in der Auslegung Iona des Prophetens").

<sup>51</sup>Luther's later lectures on Genesis were delivered from 1535 until his death (1545). They contain much of his mature thought on ritual, attack many Catholic practices, and could serve as a *summa* of his ideas on ceremony. But they were published only after 1544, in four parts, until 1555; see, for example, WA 44: 168–72 (on Gen. 35: 2). The same rule applies to Luther's *Table Talks* (*Tischreden*), full of his thoughts on ritual (including comments on Erasmus) but printed in partial and fitful starts only after 1566; *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Abteilung Tischreden*, 6 vols. (Weimar, 1912–21), 1: xi.

<sup>52</sup>A sampling of relevant works: Nicolaus von Amsdorff, *Vorkündigung des vollkommen Ablas der Römischen Bullen / So Bapst Paulus der dritt itzt im XXXV. Jar hath lassen aussgeben* ([Magdeburg: Hans Walther, 1535]; VD16 A 2398), which attacks indulgences and processions, as though one could do "works" to appease God; Jan Augusta, *Rechen-schafft des Glaubens / der dienst vnnnd Cerimonien / der brüder in Behmen vnd Mehrern* (Zürich: Christoph Froschauer, 1532; VD16 A 4138); Johannes Buchstab, *Von beleidung der Priester liechter weiwasser / geweychten saltz vnd eschen / meßfrümen (so man nempt opffren) gesang / vnd bildnissen / so in der Cristenlichen kilchen [sic] got zum lob vnd zecer gebrucht werden. Ein kurtze vnderichtung vß götlicher geschriff* ([Strasbourg: Johann Grüninger], 1527; VD16 B 9055); Johannes Bugenhagen, *Etlich Christliche bedencken von der Mess vnd andern Cerimonien* (Wittenberg: Hans Weiss, 1525; VD16 B 9320) – there were at least four editions of this work in 1525 (VD16 B9317–B9320).

violent evangelical protests erupted during religious rituals, especially processions.<sup>53</sup> These events surely informed Catholic attitudes no less than Luther's early, popular writings and those of his supporters.<sup>54</sup>

Well before he posted his 95 *Theses* (Oct. 31, 1517), Luther was developing components of his evangelical theology and, at the same time, filling his sermons with common criticisms of popular superstitions and behaviors on church holidays. In July 1516, he began seven months of preaching on the Decalogue in Wittenberg's city church. In terms of ritual and popular piety, he showed himself very much a late medieval reformer. He criticized church festivals and their debaucheries just as he called for the reduction or elimination of certain rituals, saints' days, and parish fairs. The sermons proved so popular that printers issued six Latin and five German editions by 1520.<sup>55</sup> Luther became Germany's most important voice on ceremonial issues because he became Germany's most popular author.

Original ideas followed, however, as Luther expanded his critique of indulgences and developed theologies of justification and the sacraments as well as his views on scriptural and papal authority. All the while he was concerned with a reformation of popular piety, which he promoted in a number of best-selling pamphlets. One of them struck at the heart of traditional practice, *A Sermon on Prayer and Procession during the Rogation Days* (1519).<sup>56</sup> Like others before him, Luther denounced superstitious practices and rampant licentiousness. He followed his forerunners by insisting that the whole purpose of the Rogations was to protect the crops and to cleanse the air of demons. But he framed everything in terms of his new theology: no one obtains anything on his own through prayer (only through the goodness of God); our spiritual state, or worthiness, is no prerequisite for being heard by God; processions and other rituals are not "accomplishments" and in fact should be abolished because, given common behaviors, they are more likely to earn God's wrath. At best, he admitted, properly held processions might serve as an exercise in "penitential discipline." As things stood, however, it would be better to abolish them altogether.<sup>57</sup>

Luther's most influential writings appeared in 1520. His *Address to the Christian Nobility* radically reoriented traditional ecclesiology and placed church reform (and control) in the hands of secular princes, even if those princes needed to proceed under

<sup>53</sup>Seventeen of the twenty-two incidents analyzed by Robert W. Scribner involved disruptions during times of increased ritual practice before 1525: "Reformation, Carnival, and the World Turned Upside-Down," in idem, *Popular Culture and Popular Movements*, 71–102, here 73–78.

<sup>54</sup>There were Catholic treatises written against specific works by Luther that included discussions of ceremonies, but nothing in the early years pertaining to ritual *per se*, e.g. Kaspar Schatzgeyer, OFM, *Von der waren Christlichen und Evangelischen freyheit // De vera libertate evangelica*, ed. Philipp Schäfer, *Corpus Catholicorum*, 40 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1987), written *contra* one of Luther's most widely circulated treatises, *Christian Freedom* (1520), in WA 7: 49–73 (which briefly treated ritual). For examples of genres other than postils in which Catholics engaged with ritual issues more explicitly after 1530, see the works of Bachmann, Alveld, Braun, Cochlaeus, Eck, and Nausea cited in the footnotes of Frymire, "*Demonstrationes catholicae*," 166f.

<sup>55</sup>Luther, *Decem praecepta Wittenbergensi praedicata populo*, in WA 1: 60–141, and 398–521. On the contents of the sermons see Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther*, trans. James L. Schaaf, 3 vols. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1985–1993), 1: 152–55. Within this typical late-medieval discourse, however, there were distinctly Lutheran components: see Timothy J. Wengert, "Martin Luther," in *The Decalogue through the Centuries: From the Hebrew Scriptures to Benedict XVI*, ed. Jeffrey P. Greenman and Timothy Larsen (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 97–118, here 98f.

<sup>56</sup>In the German of Luther's day, the title – "Ein Sermon" – referred more often to a short treatise, as it does here. See WA 2: 175–79; superb translation and notes in *The Annotated Luther*, vol. 4: *Pastoral Writings*, ed. Mary Jane Haemig (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 147–57.

<sup>57</sup>Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 1: 353; Luther, *A Sermon on Prayer and Procession*, ed. Haemig, in *Annotated Luther*, 4: 154–57.

the heavy-handed guidance of evangelical theologians.<sup>58</sup> His *Babylonian Captivity of the Church* reduced the number of sacraments from seven to two. It questioned transubstantiation and denied it as a requisite article of faith. Following his doctrine of justification, it utterly rejected Catholic penitential theology (the sinner could not possibly make due recompense to God). It disavowed completely the notion that sacramental rituals, in and of themselves, poured the slightest bit of grace into the sinner: grace was a gift increased by another gift – faith – which no ritual could produce.<sup>59</sup> Finally, his *The Freedom of a Christian* put his theology of salvation *sola fide* into concrete *exempla* of the Christian's life; it distinguished precisely between what was required, and what was not, in terms of rituals. It was assuredly his most important popular work on ceremonies. As things turned out, however, most non-literate Germans never got any of its material on rituals.

Luther conceived and wrote his *Freedom of a Christian* in Latin, as any intellectual in 1520 would have done, even if they envisioned a first edition in, or translation into, German. Luther completed one quickly after the Latin version, and had it printed within days of the original. But he left out the last three paragraphs, in which (in the Latin) he carefully guided his adherents between the lines of ritual rejection and complicity. He wondered if many might fail to understand anything of his message, and turn it into an excuse for tossing all ceremonies and customs such as fasting on the appropriate days. Not that one should consider ceremonial observances as a means towards salvation (an utterly late-medieval position, he charged), but rather: one should neither slavishly adhere to, nor openly mock, the rites that the church had established for their benefit. Better was the *via media* taken by the Apostle Paul (Rom. 14:3): just as we are bound in this world by bodily needs such as food, so religiously we need ceremonies to harness us, to keep us in line. Attack the wolves (overbearing Catholic clergy), by all means, but never forget the sheep – we are all indeed sheep, and we do need ceremonies just as sheep need shepherds, boundaries, and fences. There is no better test of wealth than the experience of poverty, just as there is no better test of pleasure than chastity. Infants need the breasts of maidens [= wet nurses], but when they grow up those same maidens might endanger their salvation. In this sense, ceremonies are the “iron cages” (*claustra ferra*) that keep us in line.<sup>60</sup>

Other popular works that addressed ritual appeared simultaneously, such as his treatise *On Good Works* (1520; eight printings that year), wherein he reemphasized the notion that, were we all to have faith, we would need few or no rituals. But most were “childish” and thus needed to be “gently and gradually” returned again to faith. Rituals that helped do so were acceptable, at least those that did not grossly offend God (such as parading about with the so-called “transubstantiated” host).<sup>61</sup> Within one year Luther published another work, his *Operationes in Psalmos* which, if it failed to reach a German-speaking audience, was assuredly read by Catholic intellectuals

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<sup>58</sup>That is, Luther was not simply handing over control of the churches to the secular arm. Luther, *An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation ...* (1520), in WA 6: 404–69; useful introduction, commentary, and notes in *The Annotated Luther*, vol. 1: *The Roots of Reform*, ed. Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 369–465.

<sup>59</sup>*De captivitate Babylonica ecclesiae praeludium*, in WA 6: 497–573; again, excellent translation and apparatus in *The Annotated Luther*, vol. 3: *Church and Sacraments*, ed. Paul W. Robinson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 9–129.

<sup>60</sup>See *Martin Luther Studienausgabe*, vol. 2, ed. Hans-Ulrich Delius (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1982), 304–309, for a facing-page critical edition of the Latin work and Luther's German translation.

<sup>61</sup>Luther, *Von den guten Werken* (1520), in WA 6: 204–76, here 213–15 (points 14 and 15).

given the primacy of the Psalms in theological discourse. His treatment of ritual was similar, albeit longer, to what he had already published, but the 1521 editions emphasized ritual's importance: among the seven themes spelled out in the abbreviated tables of contents that appeared on the title pages, ceremonies found a place.<sup>62</sup> There was no separating Luther's reformation of other doctrines from his proposed reformation of ritual.

Luther and his supporters did not deny the practical use or necessity of ceremonies, but their theology (especially regarding the sacraments) required the complete rejection of many Catholic rites. For their part, his Catholic critics were less subtle. Whether they referred to their enemies as "Lutherans," "newbies" (*Neuchristen*), "heretics," or "ritual terrorists" (*Zeremonienstörer*), Catholics tended to lump them all together despite their differences. They knew that Luther held traditional rituals in higher esteem than, say, Karlstadt, the Zwinglians, or the Anabaptists, but they blamed Luther for the whole mess nonetheless, and for this reason they bothered little with either gross or minor distinctions.

From a Catholic perspective, the real center of the debate had its locus in the issues surrounding the Eucharist, not least because so many Catholic rituals involved physically transporting the body of Christ. The doctrine of transubstantiation dictated that the consecrated bread was Christ and, as such, that Christ was truly present and therefore worthy of worship as though his physical body were present; understood more historically, his physical body *was* present. Catholic theologians never budged on this point.<sup>63</sup> Following Luther, evangelicals could not budge either, even when they came closest to reconciliation with Catholics at the Colloquy of Regensburg (1541). There they rejected the doctrine because it necessitated the worship of the host, in which Christ was present *substantialiter*, and thus legitimized the eucharistic processions they abhorred.<sup>64</sup> By itself, Luther's denial of transubstantiation rendered many – and many of the most popular and potent – Catholic ritual practices invalid given the numerous occasions in which Christ's body was displayed, adored, and carried about.

In the later middle ages, His body had been carried about especially during times of crises or, in their terms, disasters (*astra*, "stars"), which from contemporary perspectives had exploded in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. All agreed on the need to address the uptick in famines, wars, epidemic diseases, and witchcraft. After 1517 both sides agreed that either the "papal Antichrist" or "newfound heresies" were responsible for yet more recent disasters and sure signs of the end times. Because so many traditional Catholic rituals involved either the prevention of future disasters or the cessation of those current – in modern terms, both were "rites of appeasement" – Catholic pulpit discourse on ceremony during such crises provides us a window into how they sought to define, defend, and critique such rituals precisely when those rituals had come under attack.

<sup>62</sup>Luther, *Operationes in Psalmos* (lectures 1519–21; printed 1521), in WA 5: 19–673, here esp. 400ff. Title pages of 1521 printings listing "de ceremoniis" are the Wittenberg (VD16 L 5538) and Basel (VD16 L 5539) editions.

<sup>63</sup>See the comments of Irwin Iserloh, *Die Eucharistie in der Darstellung des Johannes Eck. Ein Beitrag zur vortridentinischen Kontroverstheologie über das Messopfer*, Reformationgeschichtliche Studien und Texte, 73/74 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1950), 320f.

<sup>64</sup>On this issue see John M. Frymire, "Imperial Religious Colloquies at Regensburg," in *The Encyclopedia of Martin Luther and the Reformation*, ed. Mark A. Lamport et al., 2 vols. (Lanhan, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 1: 370–72. Documents in *Akten der deutschen Reichsreligionsgespräche im 16. Jahrhundert*, vol. 3, 1: *Das Regensburger Religionsgespräch (1541)*, ed. Klaus Ganzer (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), xxi–xxii, and the debates on Article 14 (*De sacramento eucharistiae*), 126–94.

In fact, the disaster discourse of the age always engaged ritual discourse, and the stuff that really mattered was disseminated through pulpits Protestant and Catholic.

### III. How the devil got his foot in the door: pre-tridentine German Catholic preaching on ritual

Preaching during an epidemic in Protestant Nuremberg (1533), Andreas Osiander (d. 1552) made it absolutely clear that God was punishing the entire city on account of their sins and ingratitude.<sup>65</sup> And like any effective plague preacher Protestant or Catholic, he served up Old Testament examples of God's wrath against the Jews, to whom the Lord had promised, in Deuteronomy, a long list of punishments including "pestilence that will rage on until He's wiped you out" (*bis er dich aufräume*; cf. Dt 28:15 & 21f.).

Punishments for what? In early modern Germany, that answer depended upon where you were. Catholics hearing this terrifying promise were told they'd be punished for neglecting God's "commandments and ceremonies" (*mandata et caeremoniae*; Vulgata Dt 28:15), the latter of which failed to escape the notice of the evangelicals. At a time when the reformation of ritual was hotly contested, Luther replaced the "ceremonies" of the Vulgate with "laws" or "statutes" (*Rechte*).<sup>66</sup> Wanting no truck with ceremonies either, in his pulpit Osiander offered the more ambivalent term "customs" (*Sitten*). Reworking the sermon ten years later, in an interpretation that twisted Luther's rejection of the "Old [= Jewish] Law" beyond recognition, Osiander simply replaced the whole lot – *mandata et caeremoniae* – with "the neglect of His holy Gospel" (*verachtung seines heiligen euangelions*).<sup>67</sup> The pressures of plague-preaching notwithstanding, in early modern Germany every word counted.

Ceremonies (or lack thereof) counted especially dear, especially during the upheavals in which Europeans had, for centuries, solemnly processed through city and village that God might spare them the rods and arrows of His wrath. In the Holy Roman Empire, this would change during the course of the reformation. There was certainly plenty of upheaval, not least in the realm of ritual. To this day, our knowledge of the early Catholic response to Luther has relied on short treatises produced in the decade or so after 1517. These polemical pamphlets *contra Lutherum* did not include much on ceremonies; dominant were the issues of justification, faith and good works, sacramental theology (especially the eucharist and penance), scripture versus tradition, and secular, ecclesiastical, and papal authority in general.<sup>68</sup> That changed in the wake of the Peasants' War (1524–26), when the catastrophe of the evangelical movement became clear, as did the recognition that, lacking a council that seemed nowhere in sight, the reformation would not be turned back on the basis of learned theological tracts but rather through reaching commoners via pulpits. Luther understood as much, and had published

<sup>65</sup>Osiander, "Wie und wohin ein Christ fliehen soll," ed. Bernhard Schneider, in *Andreas Osiander d. Ä. Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 5: *Schriften und Briefe 1533 bis 1534*, ed. Gerhard Müller and Gottfried Seebass (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1983), 384–411 (no. 185), here 392.

<sup>66</sup>Martin Luther, *Die gantze Heilige Schrift Deusch. Wittenberg 1545*, 2 vols. (repr. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972) 1: 386 (Deut. 28: 15). Luther's translation is correct according to the renderings of the Hebrew found in the RSV (statutes) and NRS (decrees).

<sup>67</sup>Osiander, "Wie und wohin ein christ fliehen soll," ed. Schneider, 392, with variant q; the variant is from the edition Nuremberg, 1543, parts of which were significantly re-worked by Osiander himself (*ibid.*, 388).

<sup>68</sup>Laemmer, *Die vortridentinische-katholische Theologie*, 204–7, 250, 258, and 275; Bagchi, *Luther's Earliest Opponents*, 40, 119, 124 (n. 106), and 186.

complete sermon collections for the liturgical year (postils) by 1528. By 1530 several of his Catholic critics did the same, and were joined thereafter by others such that, before the next decade, Catholic divines had put more postils into the hands of their preachers than had Luther and his allies.<sup>69</sup>

The negative evaluation of the initial German Catholic response to the Reformation has been formulated on the basis of polemical texts in which controversialist authors such as Jerome Emser (d. 1527) and Johannes Eck (d. 1543), obsessed with defending papal authority and technical theology, poured out reactionary, Latinate scorn on the Protestants and thus never connected with common men and women on the issues that really mattered. Because sermons were intended to bridge the gap between learned and traditional cultures, they offer us a better view of what might have been happening in the trenches. Ironically it was Eck – the most gifted Catholic theologian of his generation, and the most hated Catholic in present-day textbooks – who after the Peasants' War dedicated most of his labors to preaching and preparing postils for publication.<sup>70</sup> Three thick folios covering all of the Sundays and relevant feast days appeared 1530–31 and thereafter in another nine printings by 1555. On average Eck provided four to six separate, complete sermons for each of those days, and each volume provided detailed subject indexes that included entries regarding ceremonies and processions.<sup>71</sup>

While Eck developed his postils in Ingolstadt, the Mainz cathedral preacher Friedrich Nausea (d. 1551) did the same.<sup>72</sup> Like Eck, Nausea composed his printed collection on the basis of the sermons he had regularly delivered in Mainz since 1526, and in 1530 he released a postil of 300 sermons that provided three homilies for each of the Sundays and festival days, as well as the entire Lenten season and several occasional sermons such as those for processions intended to counter plague or the Turks (with, as in Eck's collection, extensive subject indices).<sup>73</sup> Editions printed after 1532 included an additional 100 sermons and were reprinted nine times before the Council of Trent concluded in 1563. In Mainz he was joined by the likes of future cathedral preacher Johann Wild OFM (d. 1554) and Michael Holding (d. 1561), both of whose printed postils (16 separate editions by 1568) document Catholic preaching from the late 1520s through the 1550s. To this list of Catholic postillators one must add Georg Witzel (d. 1573) and Johannes Hoffmeister OESA (d. 1547). Witzel had been a Catholic priest before he joined Luther in Wittenberg, only to leave, re-convert to Catholicism by 1527, and thereafter begin publishing postils in 1537; German printers produced 8 editions before 1563. Johannes Hoffmeister serves as a reminder that not all Augustinians joined their fellow friar, Martin Luther. By the time Hoffmeister's postils appeared (1547), he had preached for decades in southwestern Germany (especially in Colmar)

<sup>69</sup>Frymire, *Primacy of the Postils*, 38–72.

<sup>70</sup>The only study of which is Wilbirgis Klaiber's on Eck's festival day sermons: *Ecclesia Militans: Studien zu den Festtagspredigten des Johannes Eck*, Reformationgeschichtliche Studien und Texte, 120 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1982).

<sup>71</sup>Printing data for Eck's and the other Catholic postils described below are in Frymire, *Primacy of the Postils*, Appendices 2 and 3; for relevant biography, scholarship (there is little), and descriptions of their postils, see *ibid.*, 38–72, as well as the index for individual authors.

<sup>72</sup>Given the number of sermon authors cited here and below, I provide bibliography *only* for scholarship relevant to the theme of this article. Nor is there, for that matter, much scholarship on these authors anyway. For basic biographies and bibliography, see the entries for each in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, 3rd ed., ed. Walter Kaspar, 10 vols. (Freiburg i.B.: Herder, 1993–2001).

<sup>73</sup>Friedrich Nausea, *Evangelicae veritatis homiliarum centuriae tres [1530] ... Addita est in hac secunda aeditione, quarta in ordine centuria, quae in prima aeditione non habetur* (Cologne: Peter Quentel, 1532; VD16 N 227).



and was vicar-general of the German Augustinian order. German printers had issued twelve editions of his postils by 1561.

The printed model and/or previously delivered sermons in postils produced in the Holy Roman Empire between 1530 and the conclusion of the Council of Trent (1563) make it clear that German Catholic preachers responded *en masse* (as did printers) with sermons intended to refute Protestant doctrines while defending their own. The sheer numbers of printings indicate, as well, that whatever German Catholic preachers, in their postils, stated regarding the “Reformation of Ritual” reached a wide audience. Indeed, between Eck, Nausea, Wild, Helling, Witzel, and Hoffmeister, at least 56 separate editions of Catholic postils circulated in Germany before 1563.

*Summa summarum*: some seventy thousand copies of these massive tomes were in the hands of the priests who relied on them for preaching in the tens of thousands of parishes in the villages, towns, and cities of the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>74</sup> That is why an analysis of Catholic preaching on ritual in Germany before 1563 requires an analysis of German Catholic postils.

\* \* \*

Again I beseech you, for the sake of Christian modesty, discipline, and patience, that you'll listen kindly and without mockery to what I've got to say about the relevant ceremonies and ritual gestures. I'm well aware, of course, that to many arrogant minds our Christian ceremonies seem stupid and foolish. But indeed, it is precisely because such ceremonies are deemed folly that they conform perfectly to our holy faith. For surely all of what we believe, and in fact the entire teaching on Christ crucified, are considered folly through and through by the wise of the world, as the apostle Paul himself testifies (1 Cor. 2:21–25).<sup>75</sup>

This is how Michael Helling, prominent German theologian, preacher, and auxiliary Mainz bishop, began his sixth sermon on the mass just before Christmas 1547.<sup>76</sup> And as you can probably guess, he was not playing to a hometown crowd. As though all his hard work on that quickly meaningless document, the *Interim*, at the Augsburg Reichstag had not been enough, now he found himself in the city's cathedral pulpit, trying to sweeten up what to many was the *bitter Kraut* of forced re-catholicization. When it came to preaching on Catholic ceremony, this spokesman of the party that triumphed in the Schmalkaldic War was hardly triumphant. Like Saint Paul, he knew he'd come off “stupid and foolish” before this lot.

<sup>74</sup>For scholarship on the number of printed copies per edition, see Miriam Usher Chrisman, *Lay Culture, Learned Culture: Books and Social Change in Strasbourg, 1480–1599* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 5, as well as the precise data from printers' records in Dirk Sacre and Jeanine de Landtsheer, ed., “The Correspondance of Thomas Stapleton and Johannes Moretus: A Critical and Annotated Edition,” *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 45 (1996), 430–503, esp. 458, 467, 475f., and 501. Cf. Frymire, *Primacy of the Postils*, 71 n. 195.

<sup>75</sup>Michael Helling, *Von der Hailigsten Messe. Fünffzehen Predige / zu Augspurg auff dem Reichsztag / im Jar M.D. XLvij. gepredigt* (Ingolstadt: Alexander Weissenhorn, 1548; VD16 H 1623), 34a-b: “Vnd da will ich euch abermal vmb Christliche modestia / vm zucht vnd gedult gebetten haben / das jr es gütlich vnd on spott anhören wölt / wa ich von den Ceremonien vnnd gebärden / so bey diser handlung gebraucht werden / meldung thon wurde. Ich weiß zwar wol / das vnser Christliche Cerimonien / bey etlichen stoltzen gemütern / schlecht vnnd thoret scheinen. Aber eben deßhalben seind sie vnserm hailigen glauben enlich vnnd gmeß / weil sie vor der welt ein thoret geacht werden. Dann ja aller vnser glaub / vnnd die gantze Predig deß Creutzigten Christi / von den weltweisen je vnd je ein thoret gehalten ist, wie vnser Apostel selbs bezeugt. 1. Cor. 2[: 21–25].”

<sup>76</sup>On Helling's career and some aspects of his theology, see now Peter M. Seidel, *Michael Helling (1506–1561): ein Bischof im Dienst von Kirche und Reich*, Reformationsgeschichtliche Studien und Texte, 157 (Münster: Aschendorff, 2012). Seidel does not address the topic of ritual.

Like other Catholic preachers, however, Holding knew that the attacks against ritual made famous by Erasmus and Luther were neither stupid nor foolish nor, as the 1520s had made clear, without significant historical impact direct and indirect. Both the humanist and the reformer displayed what Thomas Lentjes saw as a dominant strand in late medieval piety. Both Erasmus and Luther contrasted empty ritual observance with true Christian devotion: the visible versus the invisible, the external versus the internal, the body (*corpus*) versus the heart (*anima*); what was for Erasmus the mindless performance of mere ceremony versus the interiorization – and resulting imitation – of the *philosophia Christi*;<sup>77</sup> what was for Luther the performance of ritual *before* as opposed to *after* coming to understand justification through faith alone. Holding had also witnessed firsthand the “ritual terrorists” (*Zerimonienstörer*) who, in Mainz, had intervened and protested during sacred ceremonies. Both theology and theocracy were surely under attack when, in 1525, a number of Mainz’s inhabitants tried their hand at Peasants’ War by initiating a short-lived rebellion during the popular St. Mark’s Day celebration, in which a rogation-type procession set the stage for the Rogation Days proper of the following weeks.<sup>78</sup> In order to quell the unrest and reestablish his control, Archbishop Albrecht von Brandenburg (1490–1545) immediately cancelled all communal religious activities outside of his churches, and especially processions.<sup>79</sup>

It is a testament to the powers of such rituals, however, that months later, confronted with plague and Turkish victories in the East, Archbishop Albrecht called for communal supplicatory processions during which his cathedral preacher, Friedrich Nausea, would defend Catholic rites of appeasement. Steadily increasing doses of God’s wrath guaranteed that the tradition would continue unabated in Mainz. Elsewhere, in places where rituals such as rogations had been attacked and abandoned, evangelical authorities often re-instituted supplicatory processions when threatened by disease, famine, and flooding.<sup>80</sup> In most Protestant areas these practices would eventually cease for good, but their reappearance during periods of crisis within the first three decades of the Reformation exemplifies that, teaching and preaching aside, deeply woven into religious mentalities was the notion that one could negotiate communally with the Divine.

From the perspectives of Catholic preachers, the reformation of ritual was not only real, but one of the most prominent issues of their time, not least because of the behaviors of clerics and commoners. It was hardly coincidence, in various German Catholic reform decrees that culminated in the post-Interim (1548) synods, that prelates legislated against processional excesses and abuses.<sup>81</sup> We are well familiar with the notion that perceived moral laxity among the clergy was one of the fundamental preconditions for the reformation’s success.<sup>82</sup> Among the many Catholic preachers who thought so, Georg

<sup>77</sup>Useful on this issue is Quast, “*wort und zeychen*,” 6–9; and Tracy, “Liberation Through the *Philosophia Christi*,” 34–37.

<sup>78</sup>By 1500, Christians placed such value in rogational-type processions that the rituals continued regularly throughout the summer after the completion of the Rogation Days. There was, however, a difference: rather than processing through the fields, they did so through the four corners of the churchyard, where Gospels were read at each corner. See Scribner, “Ritual and Popular Religion in Catholic Germany,” 35.

<sup>79</sup>See the minutes of the March 19, 1526 cathedral chapter meeting in *Die Protokolle aus der Zeit des Erzbischofs Albrecht von Brandenburg 1514–1545*, ed. Fritz Herrmann, 2 vols. (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1932), 1: 299f.

<sup>80</sup>It has been shown that, in Lutheran Brandenburg, they held over one hundred processions per year, including rites of appeasement, through 1600; Zeeden, *Katholische Überlieferungen in den lutherischen Kirchenordnungen*, 54–60.

<sup>81</sup>Scribner, “Ritual and Popular Religion in Catholic Germany,” 31 and n. 59.

<sup>82</sup>It is telling that Johann Wild, legendary for his *mores* and piety among contemporaries both Catholic and Protestant, included himself in this charge during a procession during the Princes’ War: War Procession Sermons, Sermon 5

Witzel stands out. But for him there was more to it than that. Abuses were rife, and what plagued the church the most “has to do with not just our lifestyle but also our rituals.”<sup>83</sup> In his rogation sermons, Johannes Hoffmeister claimed both Scripture and classical history taught that, where faith and ritual fell into neglect, horrible plagues and punishments always followed.<sup>84</sup> Johann Wild explained, while preaching during a weather procession, that beyond praying for relief from the elements, what the faithful really needed to pray for was German unity (*Einigkeit*) in both *doctrina* and divine services – only then might God relieve them.<sup>85</sup> If we would have properly honored the Eucharist and not been so caught up in ceremony, he preached that same year, “then our opponents could not say that we concern ourselves solely with external and useless things.”<sup>86</sup> Nausea knew the Devil started out small, as he announced during a funeral procession in 1526: Satan begins by mocking a solemn ritual like this, and out of it creates tremendous obstacles for the faithful and the Church.<sup>87</sup> Admonishing complacent clerics to clean up and invigorate Catholic rites, Wild insisted the same in his Mainz synodal sermons of 1549:

When people began to ridicule the Church’s ceremonies and lapse in their performance of them, no one dreamed that even the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, the holy mass, and the Church itself would come to be so despised. Indeed, those who began and caused our

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(preached 19 December 1552), in Wild, *Gemeine / Christliche vnd Catholische Bußpredigen Fünff vnd Dreyßig / nach Euan-gelischer warheit / Zu gemeinen Processionen vnd Bitfarten / in Sterbens / Kriegs / Vnwitterung / vnd anderen schweren zeyten vnd fellen / beschehen*, ed. Philip Agricola (Mainz: Franz Behem, 1564; VD16 W 2958), 101a: “Wir im Geistlichen standt wissen / das die grosse mißbreuch vnd ergerlich leben / so wir etwan treiben / ja lange zeit getrieben haben / der erste anfang ist / alles des zwittrachts so wir nun dreißig Jar vnder vns gehabt haben.”

<sup>83</sup>Witzel, *Dritte theil des Typi Ecclesiastici oder Kirchforms, aus den alten Kirchbüchern von newem gesamlet* (Mainz: Franz Behem, 1552; VD16 W 4042), C1a-C2a: “Aber die Mißbreuche ytziges stands der gemeynen Kyrchen haben viel unbe-greiffs / vnd beschweren die Christlichen Religion auff aller eusserst / für gleubigen vnd vngleubigen / weil diese nicht allein Mores vitae / sonder auch Cultum Dei belangen.” Although “cultus Dei” is usually translated as those rites that surround the mass, my documents make it clear that with this term preachers included a much wider range of rituals, e.g. processions could be discussed under the rubric “cultus Dei.”

<sup>84</sup>Rogations, Sermon 2, in Hoffmeister, *Predig von den lieben Heiligen Gottes / deren täg in der Christlichen Kirchen vber Jar mit besonderer gedächnuß vnd Eer begangen vnnnd gefeyrt wirt*, trans. Leonhard Haller (1547; Ingolstadt: Alexander and Samuel Weissenhorn, 1550; VD16 H 4260), 117a: “Wenn es sunst gleich richtiger züengi in allen sachen / denn es laider geet / so wär des ainig gnüg das Gott die Teütschen straffet noch mer hörter denn er thüt vmb verlassung vnd abfals wegen der Religion. Vnd ich sag bey Götlicher warheit das ich laid trag vnd angst hab für vnns Teütschen dises ainigen vnd doch des aller höchsten stuck halben. Denn wo man findt vnd lißt / auch in Haidnischen büchern. De concepta seu neglecta religione. Das ist von verlaßdter oder verachter religion / glauben vnnnd Gottes dienst / da ist all mal da bey zefinden vnd zü lesen von mörcklichen vnd schwären plagen vnd straffen. Ich möcht es nach lengs mit Bibli-schen vnd andern exempeln dar thün ...”

<sup>85</sup>Wild, *Weather Procession Sermons, Sermon 2* (1546), in *Gemeine Bußpredigen*, 140b: “Das vahren nun zweyerley zusage in einer Predig / meine meining war vnd ist / demnoch mans jetzo auff alle beyde weg / mit dem Concilio vnd Reich-tägten versucht vnd vnderstehet / wie man beyden / der gemeinen Kirchen zur einigkeit des glaubens / der Lehr vnd Gotteßdienst / auch der Teutschen Nation widerumb zu fried vnd ruhe möchte helffen / mich vnd euch auff ernstlichst zuermahnen / das wir solch nothwendig werck auch hülfen fürderen mit dem täglichen gebett zu Gott / zuuorauß aber mit besserung des lebens.”

<sup>86</sup>Wild, *Corpus Christi Sermon* (preached 24 June 1546), in *Sommertheyl der Postill oder Predigbuchs De Sanctis Auff die Fest der Heyligen / So mann in der Christlichen Catholischen Kirchen Feyert vom Ostertag bis auff den Advent. Dem Einfältigen gemeynen Christlichen Volck zü nutz / wolfart / vnd trost* (Mainz: Franz Behem, 1555; VD16 W 2987), 65b-66a: “Wo nun wir Christen alle sollichs thäten / hetten wir das heylig Sacrament recht geehrt / es würden auch vnserer wider sacher nit künden sagen das wir vns allein mit eusserlichen vnd vnnützen dingen vmbgangend.”

<sup>87</sup>Nausea, “Von rechter / warer / Christlicher klag vmb die / so mit todt verschieden sein,” in idem, *Fünff mercklicher Sermon oder Predig durch Doctor Friderichen Grawen. In den Löblichen hohen Ertzstifften zü Meyntz des Göttlichen worts Predicanten / jüngst do selbst gepredigt* (Mainz: Johann Schöffner, 1526; VD16 ZV 26570), 25a: “Dann der Deuffel [*sic*] versucht sich allenthalben ob er möcht eyn zügang wider vns haben / vnnnd so er erlangt kleyne versamung / so macht er grosse hinderung drauß.” The only surviving copies of this work are in Mainz, Stadtbibliothek XI gg 4° 416, and Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek, RB.Hom.q.3-a. This and the other four sermons in this vernacular pamphlet appeared in their (original) Latin versions in Nausea’s oft-reprinted postil, *Evangelicae veritatis homiliarum centuria*, Centuria I, Ser-mones 66, 70, 68, 96, and 73.

current schism never intended for things to go this far. But the Devil never sits back and relaxes once he's gotten a start. Indeed, wherever this hellish serpent manages to slip in his head, he slithers in with his entire body. If we allow ourselves to set but one foot outside of the Church, he will certainly drag us further.<sup>88</sup>

In each of these accounts, the origins of the reformation (or turning back its tide) are fixed to, among other things, the abuses, neglect, and reform of Catholic ritual. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that Catholic preachers addressed these themes regularly throughout the year. It would be misleading to focus exclusively on sermons in times of plague, bad weather, or war when, given the highly ritualized nature of the Catholic mass and the various processions associated with Saints' and feast days, preachers returned again and again to the explanation, defense, and critique of ceremony.

German Catholic sermons before 1563 yield extensive documentation of Catholic preachers – publicly, in their pulpits – aggressively addressing the Catholic abuse and neglect of ceremony. This could include ritual excesses from pomp and circumstance to wrath-invoking sex and drunkenness; wasted money that might be better spent on the poor; that the clergy were Pharisees who demanded devotion from others but not of themselves; and that lax shepherds had allowed superstitions to creep into Catholic ritual. To be sure, most of this critique was *gut spätmittelalterlich*, but given its post-1517 context it explodes the frequent assertion that vigorous internal criticism of the German Church, after the shockwaves of the early 1520s, retreated into the safe world of Latin letters.<sup>89</sup>

Critique there surely was, and thus much of what we call the discourse of Catholic Reform continued unabated in these pulpits. But not without the Counter-Reformation: one acknowledged abuses, but at the same time explained and defended ceremonies. Here Catholics sought to do three things: First, to legitimize the Church's various rituals as either biblically grounded, or, lacking that, edifying without being specifically *contrary* to scripture. Second, to explain how ritual teaches by means of symbol and representation. And third, to emphasize that church rituals were designed to stimulate the interiorization of piety through external means. Let us examine each of these three in succession.

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Well aware of the contexts in which he spoke, Johannes Hoffmeister bemoaned that preachers' tasks had changed: "These days the world won't accept anything or let it stand as is. Everyone only says, 'Where's it written [in the scripture]?'"<sup>90</sup> So he and

<sup>88</sup>Wild, *Hie nachfolgend etliche Predig / auch zü Mentz im hohen Dhomstift ... zur zeit des prouincials Synodi / Anno M.D.XLIX* (Mainz: Franz Behem, 1550; VD16 W 2980), 17b-18a: "Da mann vor dieser zeit anfieng / der Kirchen Ceremonien zu verachten vnd zu vnlerlassen / gedacht niemand / das auch die heylige Sacrament / auch die heyligen Missa / vnd die Kirchen selbst / inn sölliche verachtung solt kommen. Ja die anfenger vnd vrsacher dieses gegenwertigen schismatis / hetten selbs noch nit im sinn so weyt zügreiffen. Der Teüffel aber feyert nit / wo er kein anfang hat / wo dieser hellisch Schlang seinen kopff hinbring / da bring er auch den gantzen leyb hin. Lassen wir vns dahin bringen / das wir einen fuß auß der Kirchen setzen / So bring er vns gewißlich weytter."

<sup>89</sup>The language problem – that Catholic controversialists were hesitant to engage Evangelicals in the vernacular because it would appear to invite the participation of unqualified commoners in these debates – as well as their evolving hesitance to critique the Roman Church as freely as they had pre-1517, is well documented by Bagchi, *Luther's Earliest Opponents*.

<sup>90</sup>Hoffmeister, *Predig von den lieben Heiligen*, 149b-c: "Die welt will aber jetziger zeit nichts annehmen noch gelten lassen. Spricht nur: Wo steets geschriben? Man fänd wol geschribens / wenn inß die Menschen zü hertzen liessen geen. Achtet jhr ring das S. Paulus schreibt / da er handelt von vnserem hochwirdigsten Sacrament / da es nit wirdt empfangen würdiglich / spricht: Darumb seind auch so vil krank vnd schwach vnder euch ... [1 Cor. 11]."

others defended ceremony on the basis of its occurrence in the Bible, which in terms of processions they thought easily enough done: the seven days of marching around Jericho, the communal penance of the Ninevites among others or, on happier occasions, David's dance and song around the Ark of the Covenant to name just a few.<sup>91</sup> That Jesus allowed himself to be adored in procession on Palm Sunday served not only as a preacher's trump card.<sup>92</sup> It was also a reprimand: the Jews honored Jesus with a procession – “don't we Christians want to be better than *them*?”<sup>93</sup> Those who mocked Catholic rites, preachers insisted, should consider any number of scriptural examples, among whom Michal, daughter of Saul (2 Sam. 6) was the archetype: she ridiculed David's dancing and, consequently, remained childless until her death: “In the Old Testament, barrenness was taken as a sign of great shame.”<sup>94</sup> From here, obviously, one could move on to attack the Protestants who, like Michal, were a tree that bore no fruit.<sup>95</sup> Whereas many of these ceremonies were described in the Old Testament, Eck insisted that Catholics weren't slavishly following the Jews.<sup>96</sup> Of course Christ has made many things unnecessary now, and if that weren't the case, instead of merely burning candles, we'd have to build, like Moses, a one-hundred pound, golden luminary with six separate openings in every church. For whatever reason, God wanted lights in the temple, and until the Protestants got a bull from heaven stating otherwise, let it go.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>91</sup>E.g. *ibid.*, 112a (Rogations): The Romans were in danger and had an “öffentliche vnnnd eerliche bittung vnnnd gebett (als wenn die Christen processiones oder Creützgang halten) der Bischoffen vnnnd geistlichen darzü warn gestanden [side note: Hiericho ward durch proceß vnd gebett gewonnen] ... Ezechias [2 Kings 19] inn betrangter nott thät / er schicket neben anderen seiner diener / auch die eltesten von Priestern bedöckt mit säcken zü Esaia dem Propheten / vnd beide betten sie ...”

<sup>92</sup>E.g. *ibid.*, 151a-b: “Vnnnd gleicher gestalt hülten sich die menschen zü Hierusalem / da Juden vnd Haiden vnder ainander vermengt Christum den Son Dauid mit aller eer iubel vnd fröligkait empfiengen / sie sungen vnd schrien / beraitten den weg vnd streuweten vnder / vnnnd es hat Christo nit mißfallen etc. [John 12: 9ff] Weil aber die Christen solchs auß der gschrift kundtschafft vnnnd grüntlichen bericht empfangen / wie wölten sie sich ab lassen weisen / von so gütem grund ...?”

<sup>93</sup>E.g. Eck, *Der Drit Theil Christenlicher Predigten an den Hohen Festen und Hochzeytlichen tagen der Hayligen durch das ganntz Jar nach gebrauch Christenlicher Kirchen zu gutt und nutz den Frommen Alten Christen* (1531; Augsburg: Philip Ulhart, 1533; VD16 E 283), 145c: “Es haben die Juden dem Herren procession gehalten am Palmtag da er eingeritten ist gen Jerusalem / solte noch Creütziget werden / warumb wolten wir Christen nit besser sein in dem / dann die Juden / vnnnd procession halten dem Sighafften Christo / der da yetz sitzet zü der gerechten des Vatters?”

<sup>94</sup>Hoffmeister, *Predig von den lieben Heiligen*, 151a (cf. 2 Sam. 6: 16–23): He mentions that Michal's “spotten das sie trib wider Dauid inn einführung der Procession / des sie dise zeugknuß hat ... [no son born until the day she died] Solche belonung volgt solchem verdienst: spottter solten zü spodt werden. Vnfruchtbarkeit war aim weib im alten Testament nit ain klainer spodt ... Gott der ewig wöll noch alle zü spodt machen zeitlich / das sie dem ewigen spodt durch erkenntnuß jhrer verführung vnnnd büßfertigkeit entgeen / die do spotten dessen was Gott dem Herrn erzaigt ...”

<sup>95</sup>Eck, *Der Drit Theil Christenlicher Predigten*, 145c: “Die Newchristen die verspotten die ainfaltigkayt der Kirchen / von wegen der Procession / seind die ander Michol die verspottet den König Dauid / das er mit der harpfen Gott lobt in der procession vor der Arch vnd frolockt / wie sprach aber Dauid zü jr? Als war Gott lebt / so will ich vor dem Hrrn spielen / der mich erwölt hat vil mer dann deinen Vatter vnd all sein geschlecht / Also mag auch die Kirch den Newchristen sagen / dann nun Gott sie erwölt hat für alle secten / rotten / vnd zwispaltung.”

<sup>96</sup>Here is Eck's general explanation in his postils on the Decalogue: “... ceremonialia, die lerten die weiß vnd form des Gotts dienst / der opfer rainigung / vnd was des tempels dienern vnnnd priester zü gehört / vnd dise hetten jhr hailigkeit in der bedeutung Christi / der kirchen / vnd der Sacrament / die belangten vnnnd banden allain die Juden / Vnd so die warhait kummen ist / vil die gnad geschähen durch Christum / so haben die figurlichen Ceremoni aufgehört / vnd sint abgeschafft worden im hailigen concili der Apostel zü Hierusalem dan in disem stuck des gesetz Moysi ist war / das Paulus sagt das gsatz hat ain schatten künftiger güter.” Eck, *Der Fünft und letst Tail Christenlicher Predig von den Zehn Gebotten, wie die zu halten, und wie die übertreten werden* (Ingolstadt: Alexander Weissenhorn, 1539; VD16 E 289), 4a-b.

<sup>97</sup>Eck, *Der Drit Theil Christenlicher Predigten*, 80b-c: “So die Newchristen ... spotlich daruon reden / ob Got nit gesehe / das man jrn erst müsse Liechter auffstecken / ist aber das gotßlesterlich geredt / Vnd darumb wölten wir den gebrauch der Liechter mitt der Schrifft beweisen.” God himself told Moses to make a lamp of pure gold with six openings, among other ceremonial objects. “Vnnnd ob der Newchrist sagen wolt / das alles sey gebotten worden im Alten Testament / darumb ee die Euangelischen vnd Christo nit belange? Antwort / war ist das / dann sunst müßten wir auch Guldin Leüchter haben / deren ainer hündert Pfundt hette / mit siben Ampeln / Ich frag jhn aber / ob der Gott im Alten

Next to the scriptural criteria, equally important were the traditions of the Church and the examples of history. The litmus here was not ‘Is it in Scripture?’ but, rather, ‘Does it conform to Scripture?’, by which they meant: does the ritual help us to do what God demands without grossly offending other Scriptural precepts? (*ist es der schriftt gemäß?*).<sup>98</sup> In cases of crisis, the question was, then: do the processions help us along the way to repentance and betterment?

Turning to history and tradition, preachers did not follow the tack of the controversialists and invoke, for example, canon law. Rather, they insisted the apostolic fathers had made it clear that certain Jewish rites were to be rejected; additionally, these same fathers and their successors did not wait for Divine Wrath, but headed it off with regular processions and penitential discipline.<sup>99</sup> They left us “footprints” to follow, Wild explained, “and in such matters they were much wiser than we are.”<sup>100</sup> Not for nothing did Gregory the Great process during pestilence in Rome.<sup>101</sup> Bishop Mamertus of Vienne (d. c. 475) established the rogations because amid other disasters wild animals began attacking his people.<sup>102</sup> Wild was representative when he preached that any ritual should be immediately abandoned

... if it does not accord with scripture, and cannot be drawn from it, indeed, especially if it goes against scripture. In such cases this argument should be the rule. For that

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Testament blindt gwesen sey / das er jm hat haissen Liechter auffzinden / wie du yetz lesterst vnnd freuelst / lsts doch eben ain Gott gewesen / der alle dinng wol gesehen hatt / vnd kains Liechts bedürfft / vnd doch wöllen das liechter im Tempel gebrennt würden / Wa hatt der Newchrist das ers yetz verotten hab? Ich glaub nit das ain Bul von hymel darüber hab / Darumb sie den Kirchen gebrauch billich vnuerruckt bleiben liessen.”

<sup>98</sup>See the quotation by Wild at the end of this paragraph. Johannes Hoffmeister used the example of the Jewish naming tradition to emphasize this point (*Predigen von den lieben Heiligen*, 53b): God did not command that Jews name the child on the day of its circumcision, “... sunder es wurd also gehalten bey dem volck Gottes auß ainer feinen vnnd güten gewonhait. Derhalb man nit soll als bald hinwerffen oder abstellen was man nit findt gebotten inn der hailigen geschriff. Was da nit ist wider die geschriff / vnnd nutzt zü etwan güten / oder hindert auff das wenigst nit etwas güts / ob es gleich in heller geschriff nit funden noch gelesen wirt / so soll es bleiben / Christen sollen es nit verwerffen.”

<sup>99</sup>Wild, *Weather Procession Sermons*, Sermon 2 (1546), in *Gemeine Bußpredigen*, 141b: “Sie haben nit gewartet biß die straff kame / sonder fürkamens / haben jürlich vmb diese zeit des Jars / da die frucht der erden am gefähligsten stehen / gemein gebett gethan / vnd nit einen tag / sonder die gantze wochen / vnnd das heissen wir noch die Creutzwoch / haben vber das im jar / im Fröling vnd für dem Herbst / dann auff die zwo zeit stehets am gefähligsten mit den Weingarten / vnd das heissen wir die Banfasten. Also sprich ich / haben sich vnser Vätter gefliessen / straff vnd gefahr zü fürkommen / bey vns aber gilts alles nicht mehr.”

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., 141b: “Es haben vsere Vätter souil fußstapffen vnd wegweisung vns gelassen / darauß wir gnugsam bericht künden nemen / wie wir vns in solchen fellen halten solten / seind in solchen dingen weyt klüger gewesen / denn wir / wiewol wir vns lassen bedüncken vnd hören / sie haben gar nichts von Gott vnd Göttlichen dingen gewist / es findt sich aber weit anders.”

<sup>101</sup>Georg Witzel, *Form vnd anzeigung / wie die heylige Catholische Kirch Gottes / vor tausent / mehr vnd weniger Jaren / in aller Christenheydt regiert vnd geordenet gewesen sei. Jetzt von newem gebessert vnd gemehret* (1540; Mainz: Franz Behem, 1546; VD16 W 4041), 119a–120a: “War zum selbigen mal in der pestilentz zeit / da yderman zu Gott dem Herren von herten geruffen hat / vmb hilff / heil vnnd rettung. Diser S. Gregor. Mag. hat erstlich das volck in der Predigt vermanet / das es Morgens mit rewigem herten vnd an wercken gebesseret / zusammen komme / die Sibenformigen Bitfart mit weynen auß zurichten, Da so keiner / spricht er / an sein arbeit außgehen/ nichts handeln noch schaffen / sondern nur des gebets warten.” Witzel explains further that this was Gregory’s *Litania septiforma*. Gregory spoke of this practice often, as did Irenus and Ambrose, including the fasts that accompanied them. And all of this not just during plagues or other emergencies: also during Good Friday, the feasts of Mary including Candlemas, and on many other occasions.

<sup>102</sup>This story was told frequently, e.g. Eck, *Der Ander Tail Christenlicher predig über die Evangelien von Ostern bis auff den Advent mit sampt etlichen andern nutzlichen mateerien vom gebeet / allmusen / und gehorsam etc. zu wolfart Christenlicher Kirchen gemacht* (Ingolstadt: Alexander Weissenhorn, 1530; VD16 E 282), 44a: “[Mamertus] ... der was wol ingedenck diß verhayssens Christi / vnnd setzt sein hoffnung in Gott vnd sein heyliges wort: da treffenliche grosse plag der enden die menschen armsälig peyepnyget hat / mit erdtbidmen / pestilentz / seltzam dranckheiten / wunderbarliche gedön vnd geschlay zu nacht jm lufft: auch das die wölff mit gewalt vnd hauffen weyß in die dörrer vnd Stet geloffen sint / vnd in gantz hauffen der menschen mit tödtlichen bitten eingefallen: hat der heylig Mamertus dise zierliche herrliche procession / creütgang vnd bettag auffgesetzt.” Much the same in Nausea, *Evangelicae veritatis homiliarum centuria*, Centuria 1, Sermo 46, 61E.

which goes against the holy scriptures is certainly evil. In other matters, however, it's sufficient that something accords, or measures up to, what is in scripture and may be drawn from it.<sup>103</sup>

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If the Church drew ritual from Scripture, what were common men and women to draw from ritual? Catholic preachers emphasized that, in a world full of the literally and spiritually illiterate, ceremonies were necessary throughout one's life: the great majority would remain *infanti in Christo*, and a life spent hearing sermons would bear no fruit unless that life were spent participating in rites. As the rogations ended, one preacher noted that the processions had served "to visibly present the mysteries of the faith to the simple and the young."<sup>104</sup> Scripture worked the same way: Jesus showed himself a master rhetorician by speaking simply and employing signs, metaphors, and parables.<sup>105</sup> Ritual was a language that communicated meaning. That is why Hoffmeister acknowledged that what he was about to preach had just been "shown and proven" in the ritual.<sup>106</sup> If Jesus could cure disease through an invisible act of will, why did he bother with the laying on of hands? "The vangelicals are so holy that they don't need ceremonies. If they're right, then why did Jesus use them?"<sup>107</sup> As "outward signs of our inner Christian faith,"<sup>108</sup> preachers insisted that no ceremony should occur without a sermon,<sup>109</sup> in which was explained the symbolic

<sup>103</sup>Wild, *Sommertheyl der Postill ... De Sanctis*, 93a: If one can critique a ritual and legitimately question whether, "Das ist der schrift nit gemäß / kan nit darauß gezogen werden / ja ist jr gantz zü wider. Da hett diß Argument statt. Dann was der Heyligen geschriff zü wider ist / daß ist gewißlich böß. In andern sachen its genüg das ein ding der geschriff gemeß sey / vnd darauß mög gezogen werden (italics mine)."

<sup>104</sup>Wild, *Ascension Thursday* (preached May 18, 1542), in *ibid.*, 54a–b: Such customary ceremonies serve "den Einfältigen und Kindern die Geheimnisse des Glaubens anschaulich darzustellen."

<sup>105</sup>Eck, *Christenliche Außlegung der Evangelienn vonn der zeit / durch das gantz Jar / nach gemainem verstand der Kirchen unnd heiligen vätter von der selbigen angenommen ... Der Erste Tail vom Advent biß Ostern* (Ingolstadt: Alexander Weisenhorn, 1530; VD16 E 282), 128d: "... wie der Euangelist bezeügt / on parabel redt er [Jesus] nichts mit in: darumb dise eüsserliche kirchen ordnung ist auch dermassen auffgesetzt."

<sup>106</sup>Hoffmeister, *Predig von den lieben Heiligen*, 149c: "Mein fürnemmen was zü sagen von lob vnd speiß die vnserm aller hochwürdigsten Sacrament von Christlichen vnd andächtigen herten ist in heutiger Proceß erzaigt vnd bewisen."

<sup>107</sup>Eck, *Der Ander Tail Christenlicher predig*, 153d: "Die große des glaubens erscheinet auß dem / dann sie begerten allein / er solte sein handt auff jn legen / so glaubten sie / der würdt gesundt: wiewol der herr allein mit dem wort / ja allein mit dem willen mocht die krancken gesundt machen / noch hat er dise Ceremonien vnd äusserlich gebreng / vnd leybliche äusserliche übung gebraucht mit auff legung der Henndt / wie er auch nach jm sein Aposteln das verlassen hat ... Wo sind nun vnser newchristen die so heylig sind / das sie keiner Ceremoni bedörffin / sie verspotten all äusserlich leiblich gebreuch der kirchen / als zenselwerck / sie sindt nicht anders dann ein lautter geyst. Wann aber jr leer recht wer / warumb hat Christus die gebraucht ...?"

<sup>108</sup>Eck, *Christenliche Außlegung der Evangelienn ... Der Erste Tail*, 128c-d: "Zum dem dritten so lernen wir hie / wie die procession vnnd vmbgãng mit ausserlichen kirchen gebrãng vnd gebrauch (ceremoniis) Gott dienstlich vnd Gott gefällig sint: dann es sint eusserlich zaychen vnd zeügniz vnser innerlichen Christlichen glauben: die hat auff gesetzt die Christenliche kirch on zweyfel aus einblasen vnnd einsprechen des heyligen geysts die nit yrren kan: jr glab wirt nit brechhaftig sein: der herr wirt bleyben bey jhr biß zu endung der welt ..."

<sup>109</sup>Wild, *Postill oder Predigbüch Euangelischer warheyet vnd rechter Catholischer Lehr / vber die Euangelien / so nach Ordnung der Allgemeynen Christlichen Kirchen / vom Aduent / biß auff Ostern gelesen werden / vnd auff jeden Sontag zehen sonderlicher Predig / Allen Gotsfürchtigen / Güthertigen / vnd sonderlich dem eynfältigen gemeynen Christlichen Volck zü nutz / wolfart / vnd trost* (Mainz: Franz Behem, 1552; VD16 W 2984), 12a: "Denn es ist gewiß, daß kein Ding, wie gut es immer ist, einen Menschen viel bewegt oder ihm ene Lust und Begierde macht, wenn er nicht weiß, was es ist. Was soll es denn auch einem einfältigen Christen viel Andacht bringen, was man in der Kirche thut, wenn man ihm nicht anzeigt und sagt, was es ist und bedeutet? Man sieht's auch und hört's, daß der gemeine Haufe keine andere Entschuldigung für gibt, warum er keine Lust mehr hat zu den Kirchenordnungen, als daß er's nicht versteht, wiewohl man dagegen sieht, daß er aus den deutschen Gesängen, die er doch versteht, auch nicht desto andächtiger wird." If preachers would explain the deeper sense of ritual to the people, "so würde daraus folgen, daß auch der gemeine Haufe desto mehr Andacht, Liebe und Lust würde haben zu den Kirchen-Ceremonien, würde auch desto weniger achten, was andere darwider plärren und schreien." Quoted by Niklaus Paulus, *Johann Wild. Ein Mainzer Dom-prediger des 16. Jahrhunderts*, Schriften der Görres-Gesellschaft 1893, no. 3 (Cologne: J.P. Bachem, 1893), 11f.

significance of each ritual object.<sup>110</sup> In Mainz, Michael Helling suggested that ritual-as-representation had a long and venerable history. Take the Jews: “the ceremonies of their feasts were considered the same thing as an exegesis, an explanation, and a sermon in the eyes of the people, with which they might understand the meaning of the feast.”<sup>111</sup> His colleague Wild agreed: our procession “is nothing other than a representation and visible presentation of the faith” (*eine Representation vnnnd sichtbarliche darstellung*).<sup>112</sup>

The danger was, that one stop there. Ritual represented, and ritual taught, but it needed to result in spiritual imitation. As Wild put it: “You need to take what you’ve seen or done with your eyes and body in this procession, and do the same with your soul (*das thü auch Geystlich*).”<sup>113</sup> After fifteen years of preaching, however, he was realistic: “... in addition to words others need to have it put before their eyes – and even then it barely sinks in.”<sup>114</sup> In times of disaster, however, it was imperative that it do so. Ritual

<sup>110</sup>So, for example, Eck explained candles (*Der Drit Theil Christenlicher Predigten*, 81a-b) and palm branches (*Christenliche Außlegung der Evangelien ... Der Erste Tail*, 129b). Wild provided details for the procession during the Purification of Mary celebration in 1547: *Postill oder Predigbuch De Sanctis / Auff die Fest der Heyligen / so mann feyert / Vom Aduent an biß auff Ostern* (Mainz: Franz Behem, 1554; VD16 W 2986), 132b-133b: [here a paraphrase followed by his original German; italics mine]: “Is it enough that we take joy in the presence of Christ? No. *Meet your God on His own terms, or oppose him completely. The Church teaches us exactly how to do this in today’s procession.* First we should process along two by two, which signifies Christian unity and brotherly love, which above all else needs to be present in our procession. Second, we shouldn’t go about in this procession idly and with empty hands ... For that reason we need to hold candles, and hold them up publically and lit or burning. Nor may these candles have been lit from any other fire, than that fire which was previously sanctified in the Church. Our candle signifies our faith, which we should not only have in our hearts, but also carry about in our hands, that is, we should demonstrate our faith through our works ... The candle’s fire is a sincere and ardent effective [i.e. operative] faith. Third, we cannot remain silent in our procession, rather we must sing and praise God. For God loves joyous prayer. Fourth, in our procession we cannot stand still, rather progress from one virtue to the next [i.e. through the churches of Mainz] until we’ve come far enough to be able to see God for all eternity in Zion ... *Just see it! That’s what this procession today teaches us.*” In the original: “Ist aber genüg / daß wir vns der gegenwertigkeit Christi freuwen? Neyn. *Begegne deinem Gott / oder gang jm entgegen. Wie aber das selbig geschehen soll, lehret vns die Kirch in der heuttigen Procession.* Zum ersten sollen je zwen vnd zwen mit einander gehn / das bedeutet nun die Christliche eynigkeit vnd brüderliche lieb / die gehört nun vor allen dingen in vnser Procession ... Zum andern / sollen wir inn vnser Procession nit müssig vnnnd mit leeren henden gehn ... Deeralben müssen wir kertzen haben vnd die selbige nit heimlich / sonder öffentlich tragen vnd angezündt oder brunned / doch von keinem andern feuwer angezündt / dann das vorhin in der Kirchen geheiligt ist. Vnser kertz ist der glaub / den sollen wir nit allein im herten haben / sondern auch in den henden tragen / das ist / mit den wercken erzeygen ... Das Feuer [ist] ein auffrichtiger inbrünstiger wirkender Glaub. Zum dritten / müssen wir nit stilschweygen in vnser Procession / sonder singen vnd Gott loben. Dann ein frölichen Gebet hat Gott lieb ... Zum vierdten / müssen wir in vnser Procession nit still stohn / sonder fürgehn von einer tugend zu der andern / biß daß wir kommen da wir Gott ewiglich mögen sehn zu Syon ... *Sihe das lehret vns diß vnser heutig Procession.*”

<sup>111</sup>Helling, *De Tempore. Das ist, Sommertheyl der Postill vnd Predig nach catholischer Auslegung aller Sontäglich Evangelien, von Ostern bisz auff den Aduent / rc.*, ed. Philip Agricola (Mainz: Franz Behem, 1568; VD16 H 1602), 83b: “... die Ceremonii waren nichts anderst / als ein erinnerung und ein Gedechtnuß der guten thaten Gottes / vnd die Cerimonii der fest / waren gleich als ein außlegung / vnnnd als ein predig in den augen der menschen / dabey sie sehen möchten / was das Fest für ein bedeutnuß hat.”

<sup>112</sup>Wild, *Postill oder Predigbuch De Sanctis ... Vom Aduent an biß auff Ostern*, 133b: “Ja wenn wir es recht wöllen bedencken / so ist diß heuttig Procession nichts anderst / dann ein Representation vnnnd sichtbarliche darstellung des Glaubens ...”

<sup>113</sup>Wild, *Sommertheyl der Postill De Sanctis*, 65b: “... was du heüt in der Procession leyblich vnd sichtbarlich gethon oder gesehen hast / das thü auch Geystlich.”

<sup>114</sup>Wild, Ascension Thursday (preached May 18, 1542), in *ibid.*, 54a–b; cited by Paulus, *Johann Wild*, 11: The passage addresses everything under discussion here, and as such merits quotation at length. But first a summary: Wild had preached for fifteen years and was well aware that such customs were held up as “child’s-play and drivell.” On top of the need for old-fashioned good luck, “One tries just about everything ... There’s not a preacher around who’s good enough to reach people with only sermons.” Recent history proved that: the simple had been encouraged to take their eyes off of ceremonies, and as a result they had no ears for sermons. “One has to consider the weak and make sure that he helps the simple, unlearned, and young. You may take enough in reading and hearing, but in addition to words others need to have it put in front of their eyes – and even then it barely sinks in.” Such customary ceremonies serve “den Einfäligen und Kindern die Geheimnisse des Glaubens anschaulich darzustellen ... Solche Gebräuche hält man wohl jetzund für Kinderwerk und Gaukelspiel. Es sollte aber dem jungen Volk wohl so nutz



capable of imparting the knowledge of a *summa*, in such cases, was worthless if it could not move the heart. Crucial to Catholic ritual theory was the notion that, properly conducted, it just might.

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What good could an illiterate plowman get from a mass said in Latin? Johannes Eck was certain, in his *Enchiridion* of 1525 – a preacher’s handbook and the most published Catholic work in sixteenth-century Germany – that the simple could understand the rite’s mysteries. Here kneeling, there rising, bowing, beating their breasts, and making the sign of the cross, “they accommodate themselves to the mass.” He chose a loaded verb – *accomodare* – butchered here with a cognate translation. He meant that through their ritual movements, people express the spiritual meaning of the mass and give it, in the words of contemporary lexicographers, a tangible, outward form (*accomodare, daß ist, etwas ein vsserlich gestalt geben*).<sup>115</sup> But their movements were insufficient in and of themselves. Presupposed was a life lived listening to sermons and participating in rituals in which the preacher always explained the purpose of the rite.<sup>116</sup> To the gestures Eck mentioned, one should add processing, gazing, eating, communal prayer, and so forth, all of which, Catholic preachers insisted, worked on several levels simultaneously.

Most importantly, ritual helped to bridge the external/internal divide, inflaming the heart and nourishing faith, pushing upon the soul, driving it to what they called *Andacht*, *devotio*, or *pietas*, by which they meant a genuine, Christian, internal piety (the following translations leave the German, *Andacht*, for emphasis). Michael Helling knew that loyal Catholics would be mocked for their rituals. “Tell your detractors,” he preached, “ceremonies set my faith into motion, spur on my *Andacht*, and stimulate many godly thoughts inside me.”<sup>117</sup> Wild explained that the six ritually rich weeks of Lent, accompanied by plenty of penitential preaching, were necessary “since the need

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sein, als daß man ihnen andere Dinge vorbildet und vormalt, woraus sie wenig Gottesfurcht und Andacht, ja nichts als Leichtfertigkeit lernen. Es soll für kein Kinderspiel oder Gaukelwerk geachtet werden, daß man neben dem Wort Gottes auch andere Dinge hat und braucht, womit man die Einfältigen zu Gutem ziehe und in der Furcht Gottes erhalte. Man versuche allerlei, es bedarf dennoch Glück, daß man das junge Volk zur Gottseligkeit bringe und darin erhalte. Wird keiner also geschickt sein können, der es allein mit Predigen bei Jedermann werde ausrichten. Man sieht und greift es, dieweil man dem gemeinen Haufen die Ceremonien aus den Augen gethan hat, daß sie der Predigt nun auch nicht mehr viel achten. Man muß die Schwachen auch bedenken, liebe Brüder. Müssen sehen, daß wir den Einfältigen, Ungelehrten und Kindern auch nachhelfen. Hast du genug daran, wenn du etwas hörst oder liest, so bedarf aber ein anderer, daß man ihm ein Ding nicht allein mit Worten anzeige, sondern es ihm auch vor die Augen stelle, geht ihm dennoch kaum ein.”

<sup>115</sup>Anon., *Vocabularius ex quo, Gemmula vocabularum* ... ([Strasbourg?], c. 1521; VD16 G 1106), s.v. “accomodare.” See also Diefenbach, *Glossarium latino-germanicum*, 8.

<sup>116</sup>Eck, *Enchiridion locorum communium adversus Lutherum et alios hostes ecclesiae (1525–1543)*, ed. Pierre Fraenkel, *Corpus Catholicorum*, 34 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1979), 385 (cap. 37): “Etsi layci non intelligant verba [missae], tamen intelligunt omnia mysteria, quae ab incunabulis, vel parentum traditione, vel curatorum praedicatione, hauserunt. Ideo, iam flectendo genua, iam assurgendo, iam inclinando, iam pectoris tusione ac crucis signatione, accommodant se celebrationi missae; unde ipsa actio externa ostendit eos plus intelligere de mysteriis missae, quam si Cicero, Livius, et Varro, Latine doctissimi, auscultarent verba, de mysteriis ipsis non instructi.”

<sup>117</sup>Helling, *Von der Heiligsten Messe*, 34b: “Hingegen aber Gotsfürchtige / vnnd güthertzige Menschen / lassen sich ihren spot nicht irren / vnnd spenen. Weil die Ceremonien meinen glauben in mir üben / vnnd mir züm andacht / vnnd vilen Gottseligen gedanken / anreizung geben / dan vnnd will ich vmb ains andern spott nicht vnderlassen / was mir zü meinem hail nutz vnnd fürderlich ist.” Also telling in this context, with its language of “anreizung” and “erwecken” is ibid, 34b: “Aber gleich wie die Creutzpredig den weltklügen / ein thorhait / den gleubigen aber Gottes weißheit vnnd Gottes krafft ist / jhnen zür seligkait. Also auch die einfeltige Cerimonien der Kirchen / müssen von den vppigen gemütern / spot vnd verachtung leiden / den Gotsfürchtigen aber geben sie anreizung zum andacht / zür betrachtung deß leidens Christi / vnnd menschlicher erlösung / vnd erwecken allerley güter vnnd Gottseliger gedanken in den hertzen / wo man auff solche zaichen achtung gibt.”

to repent doesn't sink in so easily." That is why one "beats, forcefully drives in" (*treiben*) repentance "not only with words but also with external signs and ceremonies."<sup>118</sup> With equal force, Georg Witzel insisted that ritual experience could "activate *Andacht*" (*pietas excitanda*), which was precisely where the vangelicals ran amuck: Luther emphasized the "inner" too much, when he would have been better off finding out to what extent ritual could "set *Andacht* aflame" and, "through the outer, break through to the inner" (*per exteriora ad interiora proficere*).<sup>119</sup> In his sermons, Eck explained how ritual, as gesture and sign, worked internally to create the necessary state of mind while, at the same time, functioned as *demonstratio*: "External activities are good for [increasing *Andacht*], since through them we awaken the inner powers of our souls." When one falls to his knees, spreads his arms to God, and beats his heart like St. Jerome, the gestures serve as an "external demonstration of humility [that] awaken your inner disposition which, at the same time, humbles itself and submits itself completely to God."<sup>120</sup>

Humility and submission. Just as preachers of all confessions had no doubt that the *causa prima* of communal crises was sin, so they all prescribed, along with proper prayer, repentance and betterment (*Buß und Besserung*), for which humility and submission were most useful.<sup>121</sup> This was, in essence, the purpose of all rites of appeasement; and one could measure their success by whether or not the prerequisite level of internal devotion, *Andacht*, was achieved. Without that, there was no chance that the necessary *Buß und Besserung* would follow. The processional crucifix and banners employed during Turk processions were not decoration, but there "in order to increase [the level of our] *Andacht*."<sup>122</sup> As they awaited the sacking of the city that was but weeks away, Wild told those processing in Mainz during the Princes' War (1552) that the ritual

<sup>118</sup>Wild, *Die Parabel oder Gleychnusz Von dem verlorenen Son / kurtz vnd Christlich auszugelegt / vnd auff die fasten auch Osterliche zeyt im hohen Dhomstift zü Meyntz geprediget / Anno Domini 1546* (Mainz: Franz Behem, 1550; VD16 W 2980), 3a-b: The fact that we preach repentance (*Buß*) for six entire weeks "geschicht aus der vrsach / wie ich oben gesagt hab / das die buß nit so gern eingeht / als ander stuck Christlicher leer. Ja eben vmb der selben vrsach willen geschicht es auch / das man diß stuck von der buß so ernstlich treibt / nit allein mit worten / sonder auch mit eusserlichen zeichen vnd Ceremonien."

<sup>119</sup>Witzel, *Methodus Concordiae Ecclesiasticae post omnium sententias, a minimo fratre monstrata, non praescripta ...* (Leipzig: Nicolaus Wolrab, 1537; VD16 W 3843); cited by Barbara Henze, *Aus Liebe zur Kirche Reform. Die Bemühungen Georg Witzels (1501–1573) um die Kircheneinheit*, Reformationsgeschichtliche Studien und Texte, 133 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1995), 100 n. 32, and 99 n. 28. Here the original text: "Nec ceremoniales Liturgicas horrebunt, nec fastidient varios ministri gestus, quandoquidem nil impietatis habent eiusmodi, sed potius ob pietatem excitandam instituta sunt a maioribus, quorum vestigia sequi, honestissimum est [...] Imo vero probari merebantur, quatenus conducant inflammatae pietati, et quatenus per exteriora illa ad interiora proficiamus [sic]."

<sup>120</sup>Eck, *Der Fünfft und letst Tail Christenlicher Predig*, 9a: "Auch sint die ausserliche werck darzü güt: das wir dar durch erwecken vnser jnnerlich kräfte der seelen: dann so ainer niderfalt auff seine Kniee / spant auß sein arm zü Gott / klopfft sein hertz mitt ainem stam wie S. Hieronimus: so erwecket er sein schläfferige kräfte der seel / das sie sich ehr erbietlich erheben gegen Gott: dann die ausserlich erzaigung der demüt / erweckt das gemüt / das sich vor dem herren auch demüetigt / vnd sich gantz Gott vnderwürfft."

<sup>121</sup>Preaching on prayer and how to pray was an integral component of the crisis sermon but beyond the scope of this essay. But *Andacht* is one of the preconditions necessary for prayer, and preachers addressed it in terms of the internal/external binary. See, e.g. Wild, *Plauge Procession Sermons, Sermon 7* (preached 1539), in *Gemeine Bußpredigen*, 28b: Christ says that we should pray all of the time, "geschicht es nit allezeyt mit worten / so sol es doch geschehen mit seufftzen / bewegung des hertzens mit begierden zü Gott." By this Christ means not to pray like the pagans, who think something to be efficacious because the words are said: "Die Heiden lassen sich bedüncken sie würden in jhrem vielem geschwetz erhöret / wann sie ohn andacht vnnd bewegung des hertzens beteten." We don't want to be like them, trusting merely "die blosser wort ... sondern sollen lügen daß wir von gantzem hertzen beten vnnd warem glauben."

<sup>122</sup>Eck, "Von der Processen," *Sermon 2, Der Drit Theil Christenlicher Predigten*, 299b: "Darzu meeret die andacht der menschen vnd ist fürderlich zü erwerben Gottesh[?]uld das gemeinglich in der procession tragen werden die sighafften zaichen IESV Christi die fanen vnnd creutz welches zaichen auch am himel würdt sein / so der Herr kommen würdt zurichten."

would not quell God's wrath. Rather, the only tools or instruments (*Mittel*) to do so were "humble prayer, a contrite heart, steadfast faith, and betterment." That is, one needed to fear God's anger and not His punishments.<sup>123</sup> Eck insisted, during a plague procession, that they were assembled solely for the purpose of bearing communal witness to their sins, without which they could never expect divine help. To this end the procession was useful. "The Bible is full of this, and gives rock-solid reasons for it."<sup>124</sup>

Whether or not the reasoning behind Pope Paul III's call for yet another Turkish crusade in 1542 was rock-solid is a matter of debate. But that hardly prevented the Pontiff from issuing a letter against the Turks in which he granted an indulgence to those who completed the list of its penitential ritual obligations, culminating in communion. Johann Wild read it aloud during a procession that fall and – sensitive to the times – promised to measure the letter point-for-point against the yardstick of Scripture.<sup>125</sup> So far as I can see, this is the only time Wild ever mentioned indulgences in the pulpit; like other reform-minded Catholic divines, his silence reflected his abhorrence of the abuses of the indulgence trade. He certainly sought no scriptural justification for indulgences. He made it clear that even though "you don't need an indulgence, you desperately need God's grace." The pope did not order you to put your trust in the indulgence, "but rather to flee to God's mercy." If completing the recommended rituals increases your spiritual intensity and incentive to seek God's grace, then the indulgence has served its purpose.<sup>126</sup>

To gird themselves against the Turkish infidels, what Wild really wanted was the faithful to take communion. Any ritual that drove them to do so was fine with him – as long as, once at the altar, they ate the sacrament spiritually (*geistliche niessung*).<sup>127</sup> Yes, they'd received it during Lent, but he reminded them that in the early Church, real Christians took it daily. Suffering the worst of crises (aka impending death), martyrs had used it to strengthen themselves. Even the Protestants were ahead of them here! What Wild saw

<sup>123</sup>Wild, *War Procession Sermons*, Sermon 7 (preached July 1552), in *Gemeine Bußpredigen*, 108a: "Das einig mittel aber Gottes zorn zu stillen / ist ein demütigs Gebett / ein büssend hertz / fester Glaub / ein fleißige abstellung alles bösen / ein ernstliche ergreiffung alles Guten ... Darumb thut es nichts zur sach / wo man allein die straff fürcht / Wo man aber Gott vnd seinen zorn fürchtet / da folget besseruung."

<sup>124</sup>Eck, "Von der Processen," Sermon 1, *Der Drit Theil Christenlicher Predigten*, 297a-b: "... so ist on zweyfel ain recht gestate procession Got gefellig / von deswegen / das das volck / das zu der procession sich versamelt / darmit bezeugt vnd bekent sein aigne sünd / dar mit es Gott erzürnet hat." God is very pleased when the sinner acknowledges his sins. See David Ps 32: 5 which Eck reads aloud and then comments: "Vnd sein sünd erkennen vor Gott / ist ain groß ding / vnnd sich seiner barmhertzigkait beuelhen." Eck next turns to the "geschicklichhait deren die proceß halten": there is no better "geschicklichhait" than "das sy abtreten von sünden / von deren wegen Gott erzürnet ist / vnd sich zü Gott kören durch rew und penitentz / des ist die geschriff vol / vnd gibts alle vernunfft." Cf. Isaiah 1: 20: "Weigert ihr euch aber und seid ungehorsam, so sollt ihr vom Schwert gefressen werden; denn der Mund des HERRN sagt es." Cf. Jer 26: 3: "If so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil, which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings."

<sup>125</sup>Wild, "Türckenpredigten," Sermon 6 (preached after mid-September, 1542), in *Gemeine Bußpredigen*, 76a: Wild will now "... die Schriff raths fragen / ob Gott durch diese fürgeschriebenen mittel möge versünnet werden. Stimmet die Schriff damit zu / wirdt vns keine entschuldigung bleiben / wenn wir solche verachten / würde aber die Schriff anders weisen / möchten wir etwan entschuldigung mögen fürwenden."

<sup>126</sup>Ibid., 79a: "Was ists von nöten viel verseumptes Ablas hinan hängen? Da felt widerumb ein knoden für / der langes aufflösens von nöten hett / aber ich wil der kurtze zeit halben / nur ein Wort darauff antworten. Lieber bruder / bedarffts [sic] du des Ablas nit / so hastu aber dennoch Gottes gnade von nöten. Es wirdt auch dir nicht gebotten / das du auff den Ablas vertrauest / sonder das du zu Gottes barmhertzigkeit fliehest. Was hastu denn hie zu schelten? Thu das schalckßaug von dir weg / werden dich gewißlich die Ablas vnd nachlassung nicht irren / die darumb nit hinzu gesetzt sindt / das du auff die allein / Gottes gnade außgeschlossen / vertrauen sollest / sonder darumb / das du desto mehr anreitzung habest Gottes gnade zu suchen."

<sup>127</sup>Ibid., 77a: "Von der niessung aber vnd der entpfahung des Heiligen Sacraments / allermeist aber von der geistlichen niessung des leibs vnd blüts Christi / hastu treffliche verheissung."

around him was not *Andacht* but perversely, as he put it, *Unandacht*.<sup>128</sup> That is why processing about with the host was acceptable. Christ did not command it, nor did the Apostolic letters. But the rite conformed to Scripture, inasmuch as Christ instituted the sacrament so that we might retain His memory. Processional ritual could awaken and ignite (*erwecken*) this memory.<sup>129</sup> If the faithful's *Andacht* was sufficient to spur them on to communicate at least weekly, then "we wouldn't need the display and procession" of the consecrated host. Because the Church cannot force us to eat of it, she does what she can, and processes with the sacrament to "move and spur us on" to do so (*bewegen vnd reytzen*).<sup>130</sup>

Rituals *taught* through representation, but this is how they were supposed to *work* – work spiritually but expressed physically – inflaming, pushing, prodding, breaking through from the outer to the inner. In this sense it was believed that rituals could effect a state of being. They were not there merely to maintain *Andacht*, but to increase it.<sup>131</sup> And along with what they inflamed within the faithful, equally important was the notion of *demonstratio* – not only to God, but to your neighbor and to the community.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid., 78a: "Es gehe vnnd hindere jhn die Welt freude nit / aber dieweil er den nechsten Aduent gebeicht vnd das Sacrament empfangen habe / vnnd auch nun die Quadragesima herzu eyle / vnd widerumb daselbst beichten werde / halte er es jetzo vor ein vberigs ding / das er darzu vermanet werde / etc. Gleich als ob das Sacrament darumb eingesatz sey / das man es allein ein oder zwey mal / vnnd nicht viel mehr offermals empfangen soll. Woher kompt aber den Christen solche vnandacht her / das sie also scheuen vnnd die Sacrament fliehen. Weilandt were keiner für ein Christen gehalten worden / wann er nicht zeitlich zum Sacrament Gottseliglich gangen were / jetzo können wir schwerlich darzu gezwungen werden / das wir einmal / oder zum höchsten zweymal das Sacrament empfangen. Die ersten Glaubigen hielten täglich ahn in der Apostoloschen lehr / im gebett / vnd der Brot brechung. Die heiligen Martyrer sterckten sich mit diesem Sacrament gegen die fürfallende verfolgungen / wie denn auch solches noch alle Gottseligen thundt / es gebrauchen sich auch die spaltischen im glauben dises Sacraments zeitlich / allein wir seind faul / schewen das Sacrament als etwas schdlichs / so doch in der Welt nichts ist das vns mehr stercken kan. Dan dieses Sacrament ist das sigil Göttlicher gegenwertigkeit / das sigil aller verheissung Gottes / ein gewisse versicherung der vergebung der sünden vnnd Göttlicher genaden / zuletzt auch das pfandt des Heils."

<sup>129</sup>Wild, *Sommertheyl der Postill De Sanctis*, 93a: "Also sag ich auch hie / Christus hat wol nieregend gebotten / daß mann das Heylig Sacrament soll zeygen vnd vmbtragen. Es ist aber darumb nit vnrecht. Dann zum ersten / so ist keyn geschrift die sollichs verbeüt. Zum ander / so ist es auch der geschrift sehr gemäß. Dann Christus hat kein ander vrsach dieses Sacraments angezeygt / dann daß sein gedächtnuß dardurch in vns erhalten werde. Nun kan aber auch die zeygung vnd vmbtragung dieses Sacraments / die gedechtnuß Christi in vns erwecken." Johannes Eck thought so for the same reason. See Iserloh, *Die Eucharistie in der Darstellung des Johannes Eck*, 323: "Wie für Eck die Rechtfertigung der Verehrung und Anbetung der Eucharistie u.a. darin gegeben ist, daß auff diese Weise das Andenken an den Herrn gefördert wird, so sieht er hierin auch die Begründung der Prozession. Er sagt einmal: 'Ich habe vorher angezeigt, dies ist die letzte und vornehmste Meinung, warum das Sakrament von unserm H. Jesus Christus ist aufgesetzt, daß er dies der Kirche hat zuletzt gelassen zu einem Gedächtnis. Sie haben dann all ihre Vernunft und Sinn verloren, sonst müßten sie bekennen, daß dies Sakrament umgetragen genau so die Mensch zu Andacht reizen und an das Leiden des Herrn Jesus erinnern kann wie in der Messe' (*Christenliche underricht Mit grund der gschrift widder die Angenßten setzer und angeber. vermainter Newer Kirchen Ordnung. Jüngst in der obern Marggrafschaft und Nürnberger gebiet* [Inglstadt: Alexander Weißenhorn, 1533; VD16 E 304], 70v)."

<sup>130</sup>Wild, *Sommertheyl der Postill De Sanctis*, 93a: The first faithful regularly broke bread according to the " ... Aposteln lehr, vnd wenn diese andacht alle tag / oder auff wenigst alle wochen ettlich mal das Heylig Sacrament zü empfangen / bedörfften wir des zeygens vnnd vmbtragens nit. Wär sicht aber nit daß sölcher ernst vnd andacht längst in vns erloschen ist / vnd dermassen daß wir kaum im jar ein mal zur empfangung deß Heyligen Sacraments vns lassen bewegen. Was soll dann nun die Kirch in sölchem fall thün? Grosse sünd vnnd schand ist es / daß wir eynen solchen schatz haben / vnnd doch den selben nit brauchen. Noch grösser sünd vnnd schand wär es / wenn wir auch die gedächtnuß Christi bey vns liessen abgehn. Das will nun die Kirch für kommen / Dieweyl sie vns nit zwingen zur täglichen empfangung des Heyligen Sacraments / So thüt sie doch wie sie kan / zeygt vns das Heylig Sacrament / trägt vns für / daß wirß doch vor augen auff den gassen vnnd vor vnsern Heüsern sehen. Ob wir doch durch das anschauwen des selbigen Sacraments möchten bewegt vnd vnnd gereytzt werden zur empfangung. Es vermeynt auch die Kirch nichts anders mit sölcher zeygung vnnd vmbtragen des Heyligen Sacraments / dann daß sie zü vns sagen will: Was thund jr / O jr vnseelige Menschen? Wo gedenckendt jr hin? Alle euwer sorg legendt jr alleyn auff das zeytlich / vnnd das euch am nötigsten wär das lassend jr ligen."

<sup>131</sup>Wild, Visitation of Mary Sermon (preached 2 July 1539), in Wild, *Sommertheyl der Postill / De Sanctis / Euangelischer Wahrheit vnd rechter Catholischer Lehr*, ed. Philip Agricola (Mainz: Franz Behem, 1568; VD16 W 3005), 215a: " ... nit allain darum / das die andacht in vns erhalten / sonder von tag zu tag jhe mehr gemehret werde."

The ultimate purpose of church ceremonies, preached Eck, is not the execution of the rite itself, but rather “that through external works we demonstrate our internal faith for the purpose of edifying those around us while, at the same time, we achieve internal *Andacht* and [spiritual] motivation. Otherwise external ceremonies wouldn’t be worth a whit.”<sup>132</sup> In crises that were communal, rites of appeasement needed to be so as well.

## Conclusion

Catholic preachers acknowledged the significance of the ritual revolution they were attempting to turn back and, at the same time, harness for their own use. Preachers such as Eck, Wild, Hoffmeister, Helling, Nausea, and Witzel saw the tumult which began in the 1520s as the product, in part, of a longer tradition of ritual critique, much of which they were ready to accept. Traditional Catholic reform discourse was alive and well in German pulpits, and preachers recognized that a refusal to address ritual would hardly make the problem go away. They defended Catholic rites, certainly, but at the same time attacked abuses within their ranks and insisted that their ceremonies were necessary for teaching precepts of the faith and stimulating, through the external, an inner reformation of piety. They were sober about their prospects for success, to be sure, but a realistic assessment of their charges convinced them that frequent and intense ritual experience would remain, along with preaching, a fundamental component of indoctrination *and* salvation. The Counter-Reformation proved them right.

At the same time, it is telling that Johann Wild claimed the Devil got his foot in the door via ceremony. He was not separating ritual from doctrine. What he meant, rather, had to do with the way ritual represented authority. Preachers often legitimized rites by reminding their audiences that, just as they honored kings and princes with processions and display, so it was their duty to honor God and the sacraments.<sup>133</sup> The Devil got his foot through the door in that, once people were comfortable neglecting and mocking ritual, it was a short jump to social and religious upheaval. As Wild said, not even Luther thought things would go as far as they had. Elsewhere Johann Wild put it this way: “Once the commoners stopped taking ceremonies seriously, they stopped listening to our sermons.”<sup>134</sup> That was hardly the result intended by Luther when, in 1520, he gently guided readers along the *via media* of Christian freedom, urging them neither to mock what the church had established nor to rely on ecclesiastical rituals for their salvation. Never a starry-eyed optimist, by the 1530s the now-grizzled Luther had learned the same lesson as Wild: those who cannot maintain discipline and follow the prescribed

<sup>132</sup>Eck, *Der Fünft und letst Tail Christenlicher Predig*, 9a: “Volgt darauß wie die kirch wol geordnet hat vil vnnd mancherlai ceremonii den glaubigen nit das in den entlichen stande der gottsdienst / sonder das wir durch ausserliche werck vnsern innerlichen glauben erzaigen / vnsern nächsten zü erbawen: Vnd das wir dar mit vns selbs ain innerliche andacht vnd anmüetung schaffen. Sunst weren die ausserliche Ceremoni kain wichtig ...”

<sup>133</sup>E.g. Helling, *De Tempore. Das ist, Sommertheyl der Postill*, 84b–85a: “Wir bedencken nicht das Gott vnserer fackeln vnser köstliche kleidung / oder vnserer Proceßion vnd seitenspiels bedürffe / den wir erkennen / als den aller Seligsten dem an freude vnd güter nichts mangelt. Solchs ist aber bey vns für ein groß ehr geachtet / vnnd wir pflegen Niemandts ein Proceßion mit solcher herrlichkeit zu halten / denn den wir grosser ehrenwerth achten. Weil wir nun für allen fürsten dieser Welt / Christum vnseren Seligmacher ehrwirdig achten / so wöllen wir jm auch diese ehr beweisen / die bey vns für die höchste ehr geachtet ist / ob er gleich vnserer ehrentbietung nicht bedarff / so wöllen wir doch jhm vnsern willen beweisen ...”

<sup>134</sup>Wild, *Sommertheyl der Postill De Sanctis*, 54b: “Man sieht und greift es, dieweil man dem gemeinen Haufen die Ceremonien aus den Augen gethan hat, daß sie der Predigt nun auch nicht mehr viel achten.”

ceremonies demonstrate “that they don’t believe and that they despise God and His Church.”<sup>135</sup> Erasmus may have insisted that the rites don’t make the religion, but the Confessional Age proved him wrong.

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<sup>135</sup>Luther, *In Genesin Ennarationem* [on Gen. 35: 2, lecture late 1530s], in WA 44: 171 (italics mine): “Tertium de mutandis vestibus est prorsus externum et caeremoniale: Deponite vestes sordidiores, ut celebremus Sabbatum, ornate vos etiam externo aliquo cultu. Tales enim caeremoniae, etsi non justificant, tamen sunt necessariae: quia debet esse reverentia quaedam in externis caeremoniis, gestibus et moribus, ut sint congressus honesti et compositi eo loco, ubi docetur verbum, ubi sit invocatio et alia sacra. Ante omnia cor sit compositum vera fide erga Deum et reconciliatione, deinde caritate erga proximum, quae sit perfecta et sine ulla offensione. Tertio sit externa disciplina in congressibus, ut fiant omnia decenter et ordine (1 Cor. 14: 40). *Qui vero negligunt ista, significant, se nihil credere, et contemnere Deum et ecclesiam.* Neque enim in coetu ecclesiastico perinde nos gerere, ac in taberna debemus. Sed requiritur ibi gravitas aliqua.”